



THOUGHTS
FOR
THE AFFLICTED;

WITH AN
APPENDIX OF SELECTIONS

FROM VARIOUS AUTHORS.

"To be above the stroke of the passions, is a condition equal to angels: to be in a state of sorrow without the sense of sorrow, is a disposition beneath beasts; but duly to regulate our sorrows, and bound our passions under the rod, is the wisdom, duty, and excellency of a Christian."—FLAVEL.

Amos Delos Gridley.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION,
BY
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INTRODUCTION.

PASSING by a region of burnt land, one could not but be struck with the sadness of the picture; it was so black and dreary, that nothing could be a more emphatic image of desolation. The poorest weeds in the fields bordering upon it, looked rich and attractive in the comparison; and it seemed as if never again could any green thing grow out of it. The next year, at the same season, it was all waving with a precious harvest of golden grain; it was yielding more than any other acres in the man's grounds under cultivation.

Such is the effect of trials improved by grace; such is the gracious object of them. They are like fires to clear up the land, and burn away the weeds and stubble; and out of the very ashes comes a new life. But under the present operation of them, being in themselves not joyous, but grievous, the soul seems consumed by the Lord's anger, and troubled by his sore displeasure. For a while it mourns, as in sackcloth and ashes, as a field blackened and desolate; but after-

wards puts on its beautiful garments, and in new reviving life and joy arises and shines, enriched with the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Afflictions are very solemn things. They are God's most precious, most effectual remedies, often the last resort, when active treatment of the patient is necessary. Persons sinking into lethargy from certain poisons, or wandering in the snow, and falling asleep from intense cold, have to be treated with scourging, and compelled to move on, or they sleep on, and never can be wakened. The endurance of the severest discipline is better than lukewarmness. Cecil's pomegranate tree, cut half-way through by the gardener, taught him a sweet lesson in a time of bitter personal trial. God was cutting *him* to the quick, but it was because he desired fruit, and required it.

The purpose of God in our afflictions is to be deeply considered; for the accomplishment of his design in them, or the failure of it, and the consequent waste of his discipline, is that which stamps them for eternity. God has therefore been at great pains in his Word to make the meaning of them plain, and to instruct us as to the way in which we may certainly secure the benefit of them.

But God's remedies are very different things, con-

sidered as applied to Christians, and to those who are yet without Christ, strangers from the covenants of promise, dead in trespasses and sins, having no hope, and without God in the world. When afflictions come as judgments, they are terrible indeed. O Lord, cries the prophet, correct me, but not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. And David prays, O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. And God says, concerning his chastening discipline with his own people, I will not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished. I know O Lord, says David, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. And Isaiah says, the Lord will have mercy upon *his* afflicted. *His* afflicted are his beloved, whom, *because* he loves, he rebukes and chastens. The flail of affliction is to beat out the corn, and separate the chaff, and in such discipline the soul has reason to rejoice, if it do but find the disposition to submit, and to trust in God's parental care and mercy. "Wherein ye *greatly* rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be

found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Now for the right estimate of affliction, for the measure of it as to its bitterness, and for the securing of its precious fruit, we have two great passages in God's Word, not to mention the multitude of passages which teach God's merciful purpose and parental love. For I reckon, says Paul to the Romans, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Here is the measure. It is just a *reductio ad absurdum*. Examined by this standard, they are hardly a thing to be thought of, save only as God's hand, and therefore unspeakably important for his purposes. And therefore again, Paul soberly and customarily, and out of his own and his fellow disciples' experience, calls what we should doubtless regard as severe trials *light* afflictions, and in the same passage shows us how, and how only, they are to be turned into weighty blessings, or to result in such. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen; for the things seen are temporal, but the things unseen are eternal." Here is the rule. Afflictions

themselves are as a telescope, through which we look into the heavens. But we must look *through* the telescope, not *at* it, nor upon it. And just so, we must look *beyond* afflictions, and not merely *upon* them. We must look beyond them by means of them; we must look into heaven and eternity by looking *through* them. So used, they bring heaven near, they help our faith, they discipline our souls, they wean our hearts from earth, they reveal our heavenly inheritance, they take our afflictions there, they make us willing that our earthly house of this tabernacle should be dissolved, they cause us to see our house which is from heaven, and make us feel and know that it is ours. It is by the consent of the spirit given unto us, accompanying our afflictions, that it is proved that God hath wrought this self-same thing in us. And thus, looking at the things unseen and eternal, Christ the hope of glory is formed in our hearts, and the eternal weight of glory is wrought out for us, even by the instrumentality of our earthly trials.

But all this wonderful arrangement of Divine Love and Grace will be more fully unfolded in the book before us, to which, with these few thoughts upon so vast a subject, we commend the reader. Let him remember that it is a book of experience, not specula-

tion; and one thing is requisite in order that we may truly sympathise with Christian experience in whatever form, and be benefitted by it, or by those afflictions that are a part of it, and that is, earnest, secret, constant prayer.

PREFACE.

IN preparing the following pages, the author has desired to address those especially, who, like himself, have had some experience of affliction. Written, as was most of the volume, during journeys for health, or in the midst of bodily weakness, the writer does not claim for it that critical accuracy and finish which he could have desired it to possess. He has aimed, however, to make his book *useful*; and has prepared every page of it with the consciousness that his day of labor would soon be ended, and that he would shortly be where human praise or blame is a matter of no regard. "The design of the work," to use the language of a learned Bishop, "is sufficient to give it protection, if it cannot gain it approbation. It hurts nobody, and therefore may pass in safety; and it offers its service to do everybody good, which, methinks, should be taken kindly by those who stand in no need of it."

In the First Part of the volume, an attempt has

been made to meet some of those questions which always arise in the minds of afflicted persons, and to impart such instruction and consolations as they seem to require. In this Part, the writer does not claim entire originality. His essays would have been less valuable than he now esteems them to be, had he rejected whatever thoughts could be gathered from the pages of the wise and good. But where the language of others has been appropriated, it has been marked with the usual signs of quotation.

The Second Part consists of extracts of a practical character, from the writings of good men of various ages. The compiler begs for them a frequent and attentive reading, being assured that they will appear more precious with every perusal.

Go forth, then, little volume, and, if such honor may be given thee, comfort them that mourn in Zion, give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

DECEMBER, 1853.

Thoughts for the Afflicted.

AFFLICTIONS UNIVERSAL.

“THERE is nothing better established by universal observation,” says Robert Hall, “than that the condition of man upon earth is, less or more, an afflicted condition.” All men have sinned, and therefore all men suffer. Their afflictions assume a great variety of forms. Now, it is sickness, with its languors and pains, its alternating hopes and fears, and its forebodings of distressing death. Now, it is death itself, tearing asunder the tenderest ties, and filling the heart with unsupportable sorrow. And now, it is remorse, or corroding anxiety for the welfare of others, or grief in their shame. And now, it is poverty and want, or persecution, or frustrated plans and disappointed hopes.

Such is the common lot. The old and the young, the rich and the poor, the learned, the highly honored, the ignorant, the degraded, all experience, sooner or later, some form of affliction. There is no earthly refuge from these storms of life. While suffering under the pressure of some particular trial, we are prone to think our case peculiar, and to charge God with partiality and injustice. It ought, surely, to repress all such murmurings, for us to reflect that God is a sovereign, who gives no account of his matters, and that we are sinners, deserving far severer punishment than we receive. But, besides this, did we only look around us, we should see that others suffer, in their turn, the same or similar trials, and that no change of time or circumstances could altogether deliver us from afflictions.

It would, indeed, be ungrateful in us, and most unjust, not to acknowledge that God mingles many mercies with our trials; and that he has made special provision for the comfort and happiness of his children; but the fact still remains, that life upon earth is to all men, in a greater or less degree, a period of affliction. "Though a man live many years, and rejoice in

them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity." This world is not designed to be our rest. It is intended, rather, as a place of discipline, to fit us for a higher and better state. It is crowded with tokens of God's goodness; yet evils abound in it sufficient to show us its vanity as a supreme good. That highest good must be sought alone in God, and in a hope of eternal life.

USES OF AFFLICTION.

THE uses of affliction! How many, and how beneficent are they! What a career would our fallen race have run, had not afflictions, co-working with the gospel, been cast into the portion of God's gifts to man!

They are often the means of the conversion of sinners. Not always are they attended with this happy result. Some persons fail to recognize, and others pervert and abuse, God's gracious designs towards them. They sink down under their chastisements, dejected, despairing, or sullen and rebellious; or they plunge into the amusements and business of the world to drown their sorrows, and to silence the voice of conscience and of the Holy Spirit. And the sorrow of the world worketh death.

But in many other cases, afflictions work out a happier result. They effect what other means seem powerless to accomplish. While man is in the enjoyment of all that heart can wish, he

thinks little of eternity and of his religious obligations. A kind Providence gives him, it may be, health, friends, prosperity in business, the comforts of home and a thousand other nameless blessings, which are designed to draw his heart heavenward, and to bind him to God's service. Alas! he is pleased full well with the gifts, but too often forgets the Giver. He is surrounded, also, by the institutions of the gospel; is convinced of the truth and importance of religion, and admires its happy influence on the character of others, and purposes at some future day, to give it his serious attention; but for the present, is satisfied to treat it with practical neglect. Now, what but affliction can arouse and save such a man? Other means having proved of no avail, God lays his heavy hand upon him and prostrates him in the dust. And behold the result! He is humbled, is made thoughtful, is affected with the view of his ingratitude; he repents of his sins and enters upon a new life. The remedy was indeed painful, but was, apparently, the only one that could save him. He now praises the Hand which chose him in the furnace of affliction, and he will continue to do so throughout eternity.

It appears from Scripture history, that afflictions led Manasseh to seek the God of his fathers; and that while the blessings of Providence were perverted and abused by Nebuchadnezzar, divine judgments humbled him and led him to seek God's favor. The Ninevites grew wanton and rebellious against God, until the shadow of his wrath caused them to repent in sackcloth and ashes. Famine brought back the Prodigal to his father's house. Very few came to Christ, while on earth, to learn the way of life, except those who had suffered some form of affliction. And very many now feel no need of the Saviour, until they have been called to endure some sort of trial. They are satisfied with the world so long as it appears bright and alluring, and need to have a cloud cast over it, in order to make them think of heaven and of the preparation necessary for entering it.

Moreover, afflictions are often instrumental in reclaiming Christians who have wandered from their duty. God does not willingly grieve his children, but when he sees them engrossed in the vanities of life, corrupting their hearts and dishonoring the cause of religion, he is, as it were, compelled to chastise them. As a kind

father, on detecting some wrong principle or habit in his child, immediately endeavors to correct it, and that by punishment if necessary ; so God rebukes the errors and sins of his children, with severity, if that is needful, to reclaim them to duty. Were he regardless of the real good of his children, he would let them go on unrestrained, but since he loves them with more than a father's heart, he deals with them as their welfare requires. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." He sweeps away his wealth, it may be, and shows him the infinite importance of becoming rich in faith, and of laying up treasures in heaven. Or he takes an idol from his bosom, and teaches him to give God an undivided heart, and to make his glory the chief end of his life. Or he lays him upon a bed of sickness, makes him survey his past life in the light of eternity,—his broken vows, his Christian reputation tarnished, his usefulness impaired, God's goodness abused, and His holy name dishonored. And can he take such a serious review without benefit ? Behold the happy result in his increased humility, his watchfulness and prayerfulness, and his entire devotedness to the Redeemer's kingdom.

Says Baxter: "Afflictions are God's most effectual means to keep us from losing our way to our heavenly rest. Without this hedge of thorns on the right hand and on the left, we could scarcely keep in the way to heaven. If there be but one gap open, how ready are we to find it, and turn out at it! When we grow wanton, or worldly, or proud, how doth sickness or other affliction reduce us! Every Christian, as well as Luther, may call affliction one of his best schoolmasters; and with David may say, 'Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.' Many thousand recovered sinners may cry, 'O healthful sickness! O comfortable sorrows! O gainful losses! O enriching poverty! O blessed day that ever I was afflicted!' Not only the green pastures and still waters, but the rod and staff, they comfort us."

It is said that a certain artist, while engaged in ornamenting the ceiling of a cathedral, was observed to walk back and forth upon the scaffolding on which he stood, admiring his painting, the work of many years, until, completely absorbed in the beauty of his production, he retreated to the very edge of the platform, a fall from which would have been instant death. His

companion seeing his danger, and fearing lest a word or motion to seize him would endanger his life, suddenly dashed a foul brush upon the ceiling, completely defacing it. With a cry of indignation and despair, the artist rushed forward to save his paintings, and thus escaped death. So God often finds it necessary to destroy our idols, and blast our joys and hopes, that he may save our souls.

Afflictions tend also to fit the Christian for great usefulness. When the disciple of Christ first sets out upon a religious course, he engages with zeal in his Master's cause, and devotes himself and all that he possesses to his service. He is a burning and shining light; he is a happy Christian, a "growing Christian," and is eminently useful. But at length, almost imperceptibly to himself, the ardor of his love abates. His spiritual foes prove too strong for him. He is drawn into a career of worldliness and sin, and his light which once burned so clear and so beneficently, becomes greatly obscured. Faithful to his promise to keep those whom he has chosen, God now deals with him as infinite wisdom sees his case requires; mingling mercies and judgments with heavenly skill, detaching

his heart from the world, and inspiring it with new love to the Saviour. His day-dreams are now broken up. Have I been so thoughtless, he exclaims, so unthankful, and so neglectful of my duties to my fellow-men and to God? Is the time remaining so short, and shall I spend it in selfish ease and in seeking personal gratifications? Did Christ die for the world,—has he redeemed me with his precious blood, and shall I do nothing to save souls from death? Oh God, forgive my cruel indifference, and gird me again for thy service!

It is by impressions received at such times, that many Christians are fitted for great usefulness. Repeated sicknesses, bringing eternal realities near, contributed more than any other circumstance to make Pascal, and Baxter, and Boyle, and Doddridge, and others who might be named, some of the most useful men the world has ever seen. Living upon the borders of another world, they imbibed much of the spirit of heaven, and were incited to labor for Christ assiduously, feeling that each effort might be their last.

The example of Christians, too, in seasons of trial, is often greatly useful. They then show

that they can suffer God's will, as well as actively perform it. And the spirit with which they endure afflictions,—their cheerful submission, patience, hope and unwavering faith recommend religion, and make it influential in the world, no less, perhaps, than the zeal and labors of others. Beholding such an impressive exhibition of the power of religion, many an infidel has been convinced of the truth of Christianity, thoughtless men have been made serious, and weak and fearful Christians have been strengthened and encouraged.

Afflictions are adapted, also, to promote the inward piety of the Christian. They lead him to examine himself, to see whether he has really been born again. They develop the secrets of his heart, its sinfulness, its weaknesses and its wants, and its utter and constant dependence on the grace of God. They tend to convince him of the insufficiency of all earthly good; that it is an uncertain portion, and at best is wholly incompetent to meet the wants of the soul. They lead him to renounce the world, as an object of supreme regard, and to choose God as his all-sufficient portion.

They excite to the cultivation of some of the

most important Christian graces. In the midst of prosperity, there is very little opportunity or demand for the exercise of *submission*. Some disappointment must be experienced, some darling object must be torn away, before we can learn that cheerful resignation, that unquestioning submission, which God requires.

Tribulation worketh *patience*, also. Did not some form of affliction enter into the Christian's experience, how would it be possible for this grace to exist?

Afflictions promote, also, the exercise of *faith*. When the dispensations of Providence accord with our wishes, or the reason of them is clearly seen, there is little demand for the cultivation of this grace. But, let the Christian be disappointed in his hopes and plans, be reduced to poverty, forsaken by his friends, brought low with sickness, bereaved of his kindred, and above all, be made to suffer the hidings of God's countenance,—then, there is need of the strongest faith. Let his afflictions come, as sometimes they do, shrouded in impenetrable darkness, compelling him to trust in the Lord—if trust he can—though he may not see a single reason for his faith except that God is on the throne, and

will do unto him nothing but what is right and for his good,—faith alone will enable him to bear up under such trials; and such a faith, strange though it may appear, these very trials are adapted to excite and strengthen. They compel him to cast himself upon God alone, and he finds Him a “refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

The great apostle was afflicted with a “thorn in the flesh,” which he prayed might be removed. God did not grant his request, but made his trial the means of his spiritual good. Bear the thorn! and my grace shall support you. Bear the thorn! and it shall subdue your pride; it shall teach you lessons of submission, and patience, and faith: it shall promote your usefulness among men, and your preparation for glory. Paul bore the thorn; and could we now ask him, from his radiant throne, he would tell us that he counted that trial among the greatest of his blessings. “The cutting and irritating grain of sand, which by accident or incaution has got within the shell, incites the living inmate to secrete from its own resources the means of coating the intrusive substance. And is it not, or may it not be so with even the irregularities and

unevenness of health and fortune in our own case? We, too, may turn diseases into pearls."

Finally, it is worthy of more distinct remark, that afflictions tend to wean the Christian from the world, and to prepare him for heaven. When he is borne down by trials, how poor and insignificant do all earthly things appear! Honors, riches, pleasures are felt to be of little importance, while an interest in the hopes and promises of the gospel is regarded as the only substantial good,—yea, to be of more value than worlds. Afflictions raise the believer's thoughts above earthly things, and make them familiar with the things of eternity. His heart and his conversation look towards heaven. He often wonders that he was so long contented to grovel amid the vanities of the world, comparatively regardless of the joy and the glory of the life to come; and he thanks God for the afflictions which have been so blessed to his spiritual good. As he goes through the world, his demeanor becomes more and more that of a pilgrim and a stranger, plainly declaring to all who behold him that he seeks a better country, even an heavenly. He looks not upon the things which are seen and temporal, for his thoughts are engrossed with

those transcendentally important things which are unseen and eternal.

And now, if such are some of the uses of affliction, shall we not thank God for it? It does not fall upon us by accident, nor is it sent in wrath; but by design, and in mercy, for our good. It is "a messenger sent out from God's presence, to call us toward his throne." It is an important part of his great, eternal plan, adapted with infinite wisdom to our individual necessities, designed gradually to disengage our hearts from the world, to mold our spirits into conformity with his own, and to train us up for his service and for his heavenly kingdom. Let us, then, gladly co-operate with him in this great and glorious design. Far from us, be despondency or murmuring! Far from us, be hardness of heart, an insensibility to the teachings of his providence, or a spirit that would pervert and abuse his gracious discipline. Let us be more desirous to profit by our afflictions, than to be delivered from them. Let resignation, a peaceful serenity, an undoubting trust, a joyful hope, ever dwell within us. All things shall work together for good, to them that love God. Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of

God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. When He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.

“For what shall I praise thee, my God and my King?
For what blessings the tribute of gratitude bring?
Shall I praise thee for pleasure, for health, or for ease?
For the sunshine of youth, for the garden of peace?
Shall I praise thee for flowers that bloomed on my breast?
For joys in perspective, and pleasures possessed?
For the spirits that brightened my days of delight?
For the slumbers that sat on my pillow by night?
For this I would thank thee; but if only for this,
I should leave half untold the donation of bliss:
I thank thee for sickness, for sorrow, for care,
For the thorns I have gathered, the anguish I share,
For nights of anxiety, watchings, and tears,
A present of pain, a perspective of fears:
I thank thee, I bless thee, my King and my God,
For the good and the evil thy hand hath bestowed —
The flowers were sweet, but their fragrance is flown,
They yielded no fruit, they are withered and gone!
The thorn, it was poignant, but precious to me,
’Twas the message of mercy, it led me to Thee.”

THE ABUSE OF AFFLICTIONS.

NOTHING is more certain than that afflictions are designed for man's good. God has given us plain and abundant assurances of this in his word. The happy results of afflictions also, in many cases, show their beneficent tendency. Much of the beautiful and the good in human character is the fruit of afflictions. Many a soul has been saved by their instrumentality; many a Christian has been reclaimed by them, has been quickened in duty, established in a life of usefulness, and prepared for a peaceful and happy death. And yet, it is lamentably true, that many persons misimprove God's gracious discipline, and so fail to derive benefit from it. Their hearts become hardened, their wills stubborn and rebellious, and their prospects of final salvation become greatly obscured. This is both their crime and their calamity. By abusing the means which God designed for their spiritual good, they become more sinful, and their condition is rendered more hopeless.

Of such misimprovement of afflictions, we have seen many examples. A—— was thoughtless, and unreflecting. Amiable and exemplary in his relations to men, he yet almost wholly disregarded his relations and duties to God. God's law, and word, and providence, and grace seemed rarely to occupy his thoughts. An overruling providence, especially, was seldom recognized. He did not stop to look beyond second causes, did not see his Maker's hand in His works of nature, or in the various events of human life. Strange as it may appear, the very medium which God employed to lead his thoughts heavenward, was converted into a barrier between him and God. Did he enjoy prosperity? He blessed the winds and waves and his own wisdom. Was he brought low with sickness? It was merely a sudden change of weather, or some accident that caused the disease. Was his property swept away? Oh, it was attributable solely to his ill luck or carelessness, or to the injustice of others! Was he bereaved of friends? It was a sad loss, surely; but they had violated some canon of health, or it was a thing which could not be helped, — it was paying the debt of nature! Thus he was a practical Atheist. And as he die not rec-

ognize a divine Hand appointing and controlling all events for some wise end, so he was not affected and profited by those events. Oh! how it would have changed the aspect of the world, could he have seen a God upon the throne, superintending all creatures and all their concerns, and in his various dealings with them, seeking only their good.*

Moreover, and as a result of this, he failed to observe the design of God in his providence. The evils of life, especially, were regarded as so many calamities falling upon him by chance, and as serving no end except to subtract so much from the sum of his happiness. He did not see

* "The idea of laws of nature, omnipotent, irreversible, crushing,—of a system in the main beneficent, which yet has its hard cases and its victims,—weighs down the spirit as with an iron hand. In connection with this idea, there always comes up the torturing question,—‘Could not the issue that has taken place have been foreseen and averted, had we been more watchful and more wise?’ . . . The only conception which can satisfy the deep want of the soul in sorrow is that of an impartial, all-merciful Providence, under whose administration there is no wanton infliction, no aimless suffering, no event which it is not best for us to meet and bear. We need that faith in God which shall refer the trial to no second cause, to the uncontrolled working of no material law, but solely to the merciful purpose of One who wounds but to heal, whose very rod comforts while it chastens.”—

A. P. PEABODY.

that they were sent from God, and were intended for his good. He was not humbled by them, nor made thoughtful and penitent. He wondered why such woes should befall *him*; why *his* hopes should be blasted, *his* plans crossed, and *his* life made miserable. His Christian friends endeavored to arouse him from this moral stupidity; tried to impress him with thoughts of a God, and a Providence that numbered the hairs of his head, and noted the falling of the sparrow; that watched over him continually, mingling mercies and afflictions as his case required, and in all His dispensations governed by infinite wisdom and love. Alas! the inconsiderate man remained unmoved by their counsels. In his trials, he did not "hear the rod and Him who had appointed it," and of course, derived no benefit from the discipline.

B—— was a cold, philosophical spirit. He was seldom excited on any subject or occasion. In the ordinary affairs of life, he maintained a cool composure, placidly smiling at the agitations of other men. And when contemplating the truths of religion, the most solemn and stirring considerations — the motives of heaven and hell, and eternity, and the love of Christ, failed to pro-

duce in him any adequate emotions of love or fear, or penitence. The frequent warnings of death, the blessings and trials of life, all alike seemed powerless to break up his insensibility. He acknowledged the truth of the leading doctrines of religion, but allowed them no practical influence upon his heart and life. And so, when personally afflicted, though he knew full well that it was the voice of God addressed to him, and deserving his regard, he gave it no serious attention. His feelings were those of the mere philosopher, and he reasoned thus : Sufferings are the common lot of man, and it is useless to complain. It is noble, it is wise to bear our troubles with patience and fortitude. Submit we must, at any rate, and it is best to do so gracefully, and not by compulsion and with repining.

Now, of course, the indulgence of such a spirit rendered his afflictions useless. God designed that he should be afflicted by them, that his soul should be deeply stirred and agitated, and that he should find no peace until he found it in reconciliation to his Maker, and in devotion to his service.

But he purposely opposed this merciful design, and consequently reaped no benefit from the

discipline. Nay, his heart was hardened by it, and the probabilities of his salvation were greatly diminished.

C—— was proud and rebellious. He believed that God ruled over all his creatures, but he did not love to acknowledge his authority. He was willing to obey the divine commands so far as they did not cross his inclinations, and he was happy so long as God blessed him with prosperity; but whenever his will was opposed, or his desires could not be gratified, he braced himself up in defiance of his Maker. He thought his trials wholly undeserved, and laid upon him by the hand of a tyrant. Restive under his troubles, discontented, unhappy, he envied the lot of others, and inwardly charged God with partiality and injustice. A *willing* submission to his trials he refused to yield, and if he bowed at all, it was in dogged silence, and solely because he could not help it. O could he have looked up to God as a Father, who does not willingly grieve the children of men; could he have yielded to the wise and tender discipline of that Father's hand, how blessed would have been the result! Had he acknowledged his sins, and humbled himself at the Saviour's feet, his afflic-

tions would have worked for him the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And from the depths of his heart, he would have thanked God for all the discipline of his hand.

When trials are thus abused, the good which God designed to convey by them is lost. Was it an admonition to the wandering disciple of Christ? He then continues to wander, and pierces his soul through with many sorrows. Was it a warning to the sinner? He then goes on, heedless, placing himself at a greater remove from God and from salvation. To lose a gift when God designs to be the Giver, is a loss indeed!

If one affliction is misimproved, God sometimes sends heavier chastisements. He sends them in mercy still, but they cost the sinner greater suffering. Stroke often follows stroke, riches are lost, reputation is blasted, friends, kindred die, all that makes life most desirable seems about passing away, until at length it may be, God sees that the end of discipline is answered, and says, It is enough. Oh, how much better for man to listen to the first admonition, and to be restored at once to God's favor!

But when trials have been sent repeatedly, and in vain, God then often withholds them altogeth-

er, and leaves the sinner to himself. There is no mercy in this. The man is joined to his idols, and God lets him alone. He congratulates himself, perhaps, on his exemption from trouble, and thinks the remainder of his life will be a continual round of enjoyment. Alas! how little occasion has he for rejoicing. If God has left him to pursue his own course, his condition is hopeless. No heavier judgment could be laid upon him. It is the calm before a storm. "Nothing can be more fatal to the sinner; it is a freedom to sin; it is the removal of hindrances out of the way of perdition; and thus giving the unhappy wretch an unchecked passage in his career of folly and disobedience, so that he goes on undisturbed in his iniquity, every day increasing his enmity against God, and increasing God's enmity against him; treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." He is the dupe of his own deceitful heart, and is sure to be ensnared by the devil and led captive at his will, down to the regions of everlasting death.

A season of affliction is a most important and critical period. God is then peculiarly near to man; is dealing with him directly and personally; taking him, so to speak, into his own hands

to confer upon him some special benefit. If he listen to God's voice, his trials will work out happy results. If, through thoughtlessness, or insensibility, or a spirit of rebellion, or in any other way, he misimproves his afflictions, they will work out for him evil and only evil.

Keep thy heart with all diligence, while under affliction. To wish thy trials removed at all hazards, is highly presumptuous and dangerous. Acknowledge the hand of God. Humble thyself at his feet, and confide in his wisdom. Art thou a disciple of Christ? Let thine afflictions make thee a better disciple. Welcome whatever means the Saviour may employ to bring thee nearer to himself, and to aid thee in preparing for heaven. Art thou an enemy to Christ? Oh, listen to these faithful warnings! The trials thou dost suffer prove that he has not yet abandoned thee. Now, is the accepted time, and the day of salvation.

COMFORT IN AFFLICTION.

THOUGH afflictions are the lot of all men, the child of God has supports under his trials to which other men are practical strangers. He need not school his heart into a state of insensibility, nor try to escape from sorrow by fleeing to the desert, or by plunging into a tide of business, or pleasure, or vice. No: for he has every consolation which reason can suggest; and, superadded to these and more than all combined, he has those comforts which arise from his relation to God, and heaven, and eternity. Let us consider some of them.

If it does not afford him positive comfort, it serves at least to restrain his grief to reflect that as a sinner he justly merits his sufferings. He regards sin as the cause of all the disorder and misery in the world. He feels that he is himself a sinner, and has ever been such; that he has trampled upon God's law, despised the love of the Saviour, steeled his heart against the in-

fluences of the Spirit, requited the gifts of Providence with ingratitude; and that all these sins have been aggravated by the frequency with which they have been committed. What a fountain of iniquity does he find within him! Now, when he reflects upon these things, he does not wonder that God should afflict him. "Shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" Nay, he feels that he deserves all that is sent upon him, and thanks God that his chastisement is not more severe. Such an habitual and deep impression of the vileness and ill-desert of sin humbles him, calms the turbulence of his sorrow, and prepares him to receive the more positive consolations of the gospel.

In searching for such consolations, one of the first and most pleasing thoughts which arises in his mind, is that his afflictions are appointed by Fatherly wisdom and love. Such Scriptures as these occur to his memory: "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Much as he deserves punishment for his sins, he does not look upon his trials

as sent by a vindictive tyrant, but rather as fatherly discipline, adapted to his wants, and applied with the tenderest compassion. An earthly parent may correct his child from passion or caprice, but He chastens us for our profit, that we may become partakers of his holiness. An earthly parent, from mistaken tenderness or indolence, may suffer his child to grow up unrestrained, and to become profligate and vicious; but His love for his children is too wise, as well as too strong, to leave them without the discipline necessary for their good. He is perfectly acquainted with all their circumstances, their condition, age, infirmities and temptations, and knows just what kind of trial is most needful for them, and at what time, and in what way it may best be sent upon them. They may not be able at the time of their affliction, to see clearly the reason for it,—because they have but an imperfect idea of their ill-desert, and cannot comprehend God's plans; but of this, faith assures them that he is too wise to err, either as to the time, the place, the nature, or the continuance of their trials; and is too merciful, wantonly to injure them. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.”

Moreover, in his trials the believer is enabled to realize, in a peculiar degree, the truth and value of the promises of the gospel. He goes to the Bible for instruction and comfort, and is surprised to find so large a portion of that book addressed to the afflicted. On almost every page shines forth some promise expressing God's grace and bounty to his children in whatsoever circumstances they may be placed.

Is he oppressed with the burden of his sins? He finds the cheering assurance: "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Does his weakness discourage him? He is strengthened by the promise: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God."

Is he terrified by approaching calamities? "Call upon me," says God, "in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

Is he bereaved of kindred and friends? "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to

you." "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Is he in sickness? "The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

Is he in poverty? "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

Is he aged and infirm? "Even to your old age, I am he, and even to hoary hairs I will carry you." "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."

And so, whatever may be the condition and wants of the Christian, God has provided the support of some precious promise. He uttered these promises at the first, expressly for his children, and he caused them to be recorded and preserved for the comfort of all who should put their trust in him to the end of time. It is as though He himself were standing by the side of the fainting Christian, and breathing into his ear the consolations which his case requires. Resting upon these promises, the believer finds

that they who trust in the Lord, are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved.

There are several comparative views of trials which serve to console the afflicted. For example: our trials are small in number and importance, compared with our blessings. Days, months, years, we have already spent in health and ease. We have enjoyed the comforts of home and the delights of friendship; have been surrounded with facilities for intellectual culture; and above all, our lot has been brightened with the hopes of the gospel. In comparison with these things, how insignificant our trials!

Consider, too, what other men have suffered. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs were scourged, imprisoned, stoned, sawn asunder, "being destitute, afflicted, tormented: they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." The history of the church in every age shows that the people of God have never found a peaceful by-path to heaven. It was "through much tribulation that they entered into the kingdom of God." What are our trials in comparison with theirs!

Contemplate, above all, the sufferings of Christ. In condescending to assume our nature,

he gave up the joys of heaven for a life of poverty, reproach and suffering. He was, beyond all our conceptions, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Read his life, trace his path from the manger to the cross, and you will find little that could have given him comfort: you will almost credit the tradition which says that he was never known to smile. And then, the last, great agony,—with what language shall we speak of that! And oh, who can esteem his trials severe, in comparison with Christ's sufferings for his salvation!

And this suggests another source of comfort to the afflicted Christian; namely, the presence of Christ. The believer regards Christ in the character of an atoning Saviour as the foundation of all his hopes,—Christ as Redeemer, bearing the sins of men in his own body on the tree, justifying the ungodly who believe,—Christ interceding in heaven, and Christ as his example, is the object of his devout affection, and the chief ground of his comfort. Were he unable to look to the cross, and see that his sins were pardoned and that God was reconciled, all other consolations would be worthless. But there he beholds a firm foundation for the guilty to rest

upon, and there he reposes all his hopes. His fears are dissipated, God is his friend and portion, and heaven is his eternal home.*

But in addition to this view of Christ,—a view which gives their chief value to all other religious supports—in addition to the sense of pardon and security resulting from faith in the Redeemer, there is peculiar support and comfort derived from the actual presence of Christ with the afflicted believer. Shortly before his death, he said to his sorrowing disciples: “I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. I will manifest myself unto you, will make my abode with you, will dwell within you.” These and similar expressions have an important and precious meaning. They show that Christ is

* “Is the hope of eternal life such a trifle as to be unworthy of, or unfit for, a song of praise, whenever any of the comforts of this life are taken away? What a poor hold of it we must have, if we can forget it in the day of calamity! What a low estimate we have formed of it, if it can be insipid whenever we are put out of the way by temporal things! I do not think lightly of cares or crosses, vexations or grievances,—they are hard to bear; but what are they compared with the wrath and curse of God, or with the agonies of despair? Any lot, out of hell, demands and deserves our fervent gratitude; and, where the hope of heaven is left in the bosom, no earthly loss can excuse silence.”—ROBT. PHILIP.

never absent from those that love him. He is at their side by day and night, at home and abroad, in prosperity and adversity, in life and in death. He is not ashamed to call them brethren. He is touched with a feeling of their infirmities. Oh, how comforting to know that while he reigns in heaven, he at the same time dwells on earth with every believer! We may not be conscious, at all times, of his presence. Like the disciples on the sea of Galilee, in a storm by night, we may suppose that our Saviour is far from us, and may begin to fear that we shall be overwhelmed; but soon, like them, we shall discover him nigh at hand, his very presence stilling the tempest and dispelling our fears. He now feels the same tenderness and sympathy for his children which once prompted him to heal the sick, to give sight to the blind, comfort to mourners, and life to the dead. Aye, the same compassion which he felt for the sisters of dying Lazarus, sympathizing with us in the trials which he has the power to avert, but which he sees it necessary for us to suffer!

If thou, my Jesus, still art nigh,
Cheerful I live, and cheerful die;
Secure, when mortal comforts flee,
To find ten thousand worlds in thee.

It is another source of comfort to reflect that our afflictions are of short continuance, and will terminate in heaven. God's enemies have no such cheering reversion. Be life as joyous as it may to them, it is short, and at the end their hopes are blasted, and woe unmitigated and eternal becomes their portion. Not so with the believer. Manifold mercies are mingled with his afflictions, and his trials, at the longest, are but for a moment, while they work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. An eternal weight of glory! Happiness unalloyed, increasing, inconceivable, eternal,—this, this lies before him as the glorious consummation and crown of his life! How abundant the comfort flowing from this promised recompense of reward! If the night be dark he knows that morning will soon dawn, and will usher in a glorious day. Oh, that day, that blissful, endless day! That enduring substance, that better country, the glory of all lands, that building of God eternal in the heavens, that harp of gold, that crown of life, that unfading inheritance! Oh, who can think of these things without finding comfort in his sorrows, and even rejoicing in hope of the glory of God!

If such and so many comforts are provided for the believer in affliction, how exalted his privilege! The gift of an atoning Saviour were enough to call forth his warmest gratitude, and to fill him with joy, even though his life were one scene of unmitigated suffering. But God's love has comprehended both his happiness here and his salvation hereafter.

And if so, should not the Christian gratefully receive and enjoy those comforts? Professed believers there are, who flee from their sorrows to scenes of amusement, to gay companions, to the exciting romance, to anything which promises to engross their thoughts, and to help them forget their trials, instead of coming to Christ their almighty Friend, and finding support in the hopes and promises of the gospel. In endeavoring thus to satisfy themselves with the poor comforts which sinners possess, they both impoverish their own souls, and pour contempt on the gracious, abundant, and satisfying consolations which Christ has provided expressly for them. This is the Prodigal feeding on husks, when there is bread enough in his father's house, and to spare. Oh, let us be sensible of our high privileges! Let us walk as children of the light

and of the day. "Lord, to whom else shall we go, but unto thee? THOU hast the words of eternal life."

"Of all thy gifts, thou art thyself the best ;
Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor,
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away."

Let us ever rejoice in Christ as our Saviour and all-sufficient portion. Let us pass through life undismayed by its trials, actively doing God's will, or patiently suffering it, just as he shall appoint, finding our supreme good in Him whom having not seen we love, in whom believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing!"

ALL THINGS GIVEN US WITH CHRIST.

HEREIN appears the great privilege of the Christian. Since God has redeemed us by the death of his Son, we have the assurance that he will give us everything else needful for our present and future welfare. Contemplation of this truth often kindled the feelings of the great Apostle. Writing to the disciples at Rome, he exclaims: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." And in his first letter to the Corinthian church: "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." What a proprietor, then, is the Christian! Language seems too weak for the apostle adequately to express his view of the wealth of the believer's privileges.

Let us pause a few moments, and meditate upon this delightful truth. God so loved the

world that he gave his only begotten Son to die, that whosoever believeth in him might be saved. The humiliation and sufferings of that Son, no finite mind can conceive. What a Giver, and what a Gift! Eternity will be too short to enable us to comprehend this wonderful mystery. But if God has given us his Son,—the greatest conceivable benefaction—we may rest assured that he will bestow all other things needful for us, in time and in eternity. He *does* bestow them: “All things *are* yours,” says the Apostle. “The world is yours,” he says; and so it is, most truly, and in a wide acceptation. The faculties of our bodies and minds, our health and homes, and friends; in short, every earthly good comes to us in consequence of the gift of a Saviour, and might very appropriately be inscribed: “GIVEN US WITH CHRIST.” The material universe belongs to the Christian.

“His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers. His t’enjoy,
With a propriety which none can feel
But who with filial confidence inspired,
Can smiling say, ‘My Father made them all.’”

In truth and soberness, the sun is his, and the stars, the seasons, the earth, the winds and waves;

for God made them all for the use and enjoyment of his children on their way to glory. As a child, in walking through the apartments of his father's house, or over his domain, feels that he is at home there, and may freely use and enjoy everything about him necessary for his good, so the child of God, in passing through this world, is but walking over a part of his Father's domain, and may freely use everything conducive to his real welfare.

It is not required of him, nor is it honorable to his religious profession, that he go through the world with downcast eye and mournful tongue, shunning the society of men, and denying himself the innocent enjoyments of life, as though they were things forbidden, and necessarily injurious to his spiritual well-being. All that is truly good on earth, God has given his children richly to enjoy. Not to misuse, certainly, and pervert to unworthy ends, but still, to use and to enjoy. We can, and we ought, to recognize God's hand in all our worldly blessings; and, instead of fastening our hearts upon them inordinately, should make them suggestive of greater and better things to come. In the midst of our social and domestic joys we may be led to

think of the friendship of heaven, compared with which all earthly attachments scarce deserve the name. Beautiful objects in nature may lead us to reflect, that in the "new heavens" there shall be nothing to offend,—every object on which the eye rests shall be perfect. When music delights us, we may reflect that in the "new song" not a discordant note will be heard, but that its strains will be as harmonious and soul enrapturing as its theme is elevated and glorious. Yea, everything in which the soul takes a rational delight, instead of attaching us unduly to this world, may point us forward, to nobler, better things reserved for us in the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. This honor have all the saints!

There are spiritual blessings also procured for us, in addition to the gift of Christ as a Mediator. For example: believers are not only justified through him, but may likewise receive the spirit of adoption in their hearts, whereby they cry, Abba, Father. They may know that if they are sons, then are they heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ to an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Provision is made also for the believer's

sanctification,—for his deliverance from the dominion, and corruption of sin, as well as from its punishment. “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” He may also attain to a high degree of Christian assurance. Instead of living in continual doubts and fears, his hope may be an anchor to his soul, sure and steadfast. He may know that nothing shall be able to separate him from the love of Christ, and that there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness.

These and other spiritual blessings are included in the gift of Christ as an atoning Saviour. They are *provided* for all Christians, and may be enjoyed by all. If any live without them, it is because they are unmindful both of their duty and their privilege. As one has said: “They remain in what the old divines used to call a ‘legal state,’ in opposition to the exercise of a full, evangelical faith. They linger in the seventh chapter of Romans, instead of passing over into the eighth, in their own experience. By faith they might cross this gulf, and so give up to Christ their sins, their sorrows, their weakness, their evil hearts, their enemies and their fears; and take in their stead, him and his sacrifice, his

righteousness and power, his mediation and victories."

We have thus far considered the temporal and spiritual *blessings* bestowed upon believers in connexion with the gift of Christ. But Christians are called to suffer *trials*. And have *these* any connexion with the gift of a Saviour? Most assuredly; and as much so as those dispensations of Providence commonly styled mercies. Such mercies are sometimes denied the believer, because God sees that in his case and circumstances, they would not *be* mercies. He bestows something better: bestows what upon its face is an affliction, but accompanies it with this cheering explanatory message: "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." He sends trials in various forms, that he may effectually wren his children from an idolatrous love of the world, and draw their hearts heavenward. And as a matter of experience, such discipline does tend to produce in them the best graces of the Christian character: it purifies their hearts, strengthens their faith, and leads them to seek their supreme good in God. Thus they are made to see that afflictions come from the same Hand which provided for them a Saviour, and are, if

we may so speak, an important supplement to the great gift of Christ as a Redeemer.

But over and above all these earthly ills, there is that of Death. And has God given us this with Christ? No! no! cries Nature, shrinking with affright from the great Destroyer. Yes! even this! says the grace of God in the believer's heart. The Apostle declares: "The world, or life, or *death*, all are yours." Death is the Christian's teacher. Its frequent appearance on every side serves to deepen his impressions of the reality of a future state, and of his probable nearness to eternity; inspires him with sober and just views of life; makes him humble, thoughtful, prayerful. It incites him to activity in every good work, while the day lasts; it teaches him, more than any other instructor, the insufficiency of this world as a portion for the soul; leads him to fix his heart chiefly upon those things which are imperishable and eternal. Oh! we are not fully sensible how much we owe to the teachings of Death. Its solemn presence on every hand, is manifestly an important part of God's arrangements to mold the character of his children for usefulness and for heaven.

But finally, we shall ourselves be summoned

away from life : will death be ours, then ? Yea, most assuredly ; for we shall be unhurt by its terrors ; it shall be made our friend, our servant, to open for us the door of eternity, and let us enter the immediate presence of Christ. We shall commit our bodies to death's keeping until the latter day, when, at the Saviour's command, they shall be returned to us, immortal, and glorified after the likeness of the Lord. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope ; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him."

Death, then, is not destruction. The soul does not enter the grave : there is not a momentary suspension of its activity and enjoyment : it thinks and feels, and loves, in death and the instant after death, as truly as before. Let us, then, not think or say that life has been overcome by death, but rather, that mortality has been swallowed up of life. Death does not, and cannot hurt the

Christian ; all it can do is to release him from the corruptions of his body, from his toils, his pains, his sorrows and his sins.

One who had a remarkably clear view of spiritual and eternal things, wrote on a certain occasion to his friend, thus : “I congratulate you and myself that life is passing fast away. What a superlatively grand and consoling idea is that of death ! Without this radiant idea, this delightful morning-star, indicating that the luminary of eternity is going to rise, life would, to my view, darken into midnight melancholy. Oh ! the expectation of living here, and living thus always, would be indeed a prospect of overwhelming despair. But, thanks to that decree that dooms us to die : thanks to that gospel which opens the vista of an endless life, and thanks above all to that Saviour-friend who has promised to conduct all the faithful through the sacred trance of death into scenes of paradise and everlasting delight.” (FOSTER.)

Nor is there anything beyond the grave which the Christian has reason to fear ;—nothing in the judgment scene, for the Judge will be Christ himself, the believer’s Saviour ; nothing after the judgment, nor in the long eternity which suc-

ceeds it, for he has the promise that nothing shall be able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus his Lord. The world, life, death, things present and things to come, all are his, and he is Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Oh, what a Gift, and what a Giver! The world has witnessed no love like this. So let our hearts overflow with gratitude and joy, our lips speak forth God's praise, and our lives evince the sincerity of our professions.

God has given us, with Christ, all temporal blessings, and *offers* to us, *provides* for us, all spiritual blessings; but in a certain sense, it devolves upon us, by an act of our own, to *appropriate* these blessings to ourselves. Christians may, and sometimes do, so live, as to have nothing but a fluctuating, comfortless hope that their sins are forgiven; as to be almost destitute of that peace and those joys and consolations which God has provided and freely offers to them. But ought I, ought you, dear reader, to remain satisfied with this? Shall the rich treasures of God's grace lie unopened? Oh, awake to your duty, and to the greatness of your privilege! Make full proof of the amplitude and value of the provisions of the gospel. Let your soul feast

upon them. Enjoy all that God has given you, with the bestowment of his Son. Fear not to take immediate possession of your inheritance. Go on from one degree of grace unto another, until you attain unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Live above and independently of this world ; or rather, subsidize everything in it to the promotion of your happiness and your spiritual welfare. Hope ever in God. Let no trial cast you down. Fear not the terrors of death, nor the solemn revelations of eternity. THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR. All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

LESSONS OF SICKNESS.

MY DEAR FRIEND :

I DO most truly sympathise with you in your repeated and severe attacks of illness. May you be sustained by a divine Helper. It grieves me, however, to learn that your mind is so often depressed, and that while you can endure other trials with patience and submission, you cannot discover God's merciful designs in afflicting you with sickness. You ask me, as a friend, to give you my thoughts on this subject. I will do so, with the simple hope that it may contribute to your comfort.

Has not sickness deeply impressed you with the frailty of life, and the uncertainty of human hopes? You knew, very well, beforehand, that health and the common blessings of life were no certain possession ; and yet, your convictions on this subject were not deep and abiding. Weakness and pain give many things a new aspect. When we first come forward upon the

stage of active life, we are full of hope, confident in our ability to execute great schemes, and assured that we shall realize our highest anticipations. *Others* may fail; others may sicken and die, but no such melancholy event can be in store for *us*. Alas! at this very time, disease may be creeping unobserved into our citadel of strength, soon to steal away our health and our pride, and to teach us a lesson of human frailty never to be forgotten. After such experience, we *feel*, as well as know, that "man's days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth;" and that "man at his best estate is altogether vanity." And if, with recovered health, we indulge new hopes and form new plans, it is with an abiding conviction that everything future is uncertain, and that all our expectations should be qualified with a peradventure.

And this leads me to observe, still further, that sickness discloses to us the vanity and the unsatisfying nature of the things which men most highly esteem. It does not teach, it is true, that we should withdraw ourselves from the ordinary pursuits of life, but it shows the folly of being unduly engrossed in them. Nor does it forbid our enjoyment of rational pleasures, but it re-

veals the vanity of whatever is irrational and impure. This thought has been so happily illustrated by the lamented Buckminster, that you will thank me for quoting from his pages an entire paragraph:

“Introduce into the chamber of the sick and dying man, the whole pantheon of idols which he has vainly worshipped,—fame, wealth, pleasure, beauty, power. What miserable comforters are they all! Bind that wreath of laurel round his brow, and see if it will assuage his aching temples. Spread before him the deeds and instruments which prove him the lord of innumerable possessions, and see if you can beguile him of a moment’s anguish; see if he will not give you up those barren parchments for one drop of cool water, one draught of pure air. Go, tell him, when a fever rages through his veins, that his table smokes with luxuries, and that the wine moveth itself aright and giveth its color in the cup, and see if this will calm his throbbing pulse. Tell him, as he lies prostrate, helpless and sinking with debility, that the song and dance are ready to begin, and that all without him is life, alacrity and joy. Nay, more, place in his motionless hand, the sceptre of a

mighty empire, and see if he will be eager to grasp it. The eye of Cæsar could not gain its luster by the recollection that its 'bend could awe the world,' nor his shaking limbs be quieted by remembering that his nod had commanded obedience from millions of slaves. This, my friends, this is the school in which our desires must be disciplined, and our judgment corrected. The man, who from such dispensations learns nothing but perverseness, must be fearfully insensible. Let us, then, remember, that every man, at what he supposes his best estate, is altogether vanity. God grant that *we* may understand it, before others are called to learn it from our graves, or to read it upon our tombstones."

Yes, my friend, would that you and I might learn to rectify our views of earthly objects, and to regard them somewhat as they appear from the borders of eternity. Nor is it enough for us to see the comparative worthlessness of these things: we should learn to lift our thoughts to those objects whose importance no time or circumstances can diminish.

You observed, in our last interview, that sickness was adapted to teach us a lesson of humil-

ity. Most truly said! It shows us our weakness,—a thing we are reluctant to learn. A single touch of God's finger has prostrated us: another would stop our breath. When we are brought to the verge of the grave,—when the friends at our bedside look at each other in despair, and the physician ceases to prescribe,—then, if never before, we feel that we are entirely at God's disposal, and that he alone can help us. How poor, how feeble, does man feel himself to be under the stroke of his Maker's hand!

And so, if one has vainly exalted himself above others, sickness shows him that his body is made of the common dust, is subject to the same infirmities and pains, and is destined to the same corruption. In his health and pride, did he seek to live separate from and independent of his fellow-men, he now finds himself in need, perhaps, of the very ones whom he frowned upon and contemned. He needs them to bring him food and medicine, to fan his feverish brow, to cool his parched lips, to soothe his pains and his fears. Alas, for his independence, it could not endure a single throb of pain! And unless he suffers to no purpose, he will rise from his bed, (God sparing his life,) more humane, con-

descending and humble. Full as the world is of pride, there would be more vain and impious displays of it, were it not for the subduing effects of sickness.

Again: is not sickness adapted to heighten our estimate of God's mercies? Take, for example, the blessing of health. It is a common saying that no one properly values this until he has lost it. Most men trifle with it, vainly supposing themselves proof against disease, or heedless of the value of what they place in such imminent peril: when, suddenly, the blow falls, and shows them what a precious gift they have, perhaps irrecoverably, lost. They now learn by sad experience that health is a blessing whose place nothing can supply, and without which, every other good gift is comparatively worthless. And if God restores it to them again, and they go forth to the pursuits and enjoyments of life, oh! it is with a keener relish and a more grateful, heartfelt appreciation of this inestimable boon.

Moreover, there are many mercies mingled in the cup of sickness. The friends who watch by our bedside, or who visit us with expressions of sympathy and Christian comfort; the various

medicines God has provided for the cure of diseases, or the alleviation of suffering; the cup of cold water; peaceful and refreshing sleep after seasons of restlessness and pain;—these and other like mercies are received with a more grateful sensibility than the thousand blessings which had been enjoyed during the period of health. And then, if we are raised up from the bed of pain, and permitted to walk forth upon the earth, to breathe the pure air, to hear the melody of birds, to behold the hills and vales, the sun and stars;—tell us, ye who know by experience, if the heart does not overflow with intenser joy, and a more filial, sincere gratitude for these and other common blessings, than was ever felt during the thoughtlessness of health and prosperity.

Another thought worthy of mention here is, that sickness is adapted to give us a new impression of the truth and value of religion. We may at no time have doubted that Christianity was from God, and yet never have deeply *felt* it, never had a thorough, experimental evidence of its truth. This evidence, such trials as sickness are adapted to furnish us. Withdrawn from the cares and allurements of the world, we

are enabled and disposed to take an impartial survey of our lives. And such a survey shows us that we have but imperfectly obeyed God's law, that sin has tarnished our best services, and that, therefore, we have no claim upon the divine favor. On the ground of law, we cannot find a shadow of hope. But here we remember that "Christ has become the end of the law for righteousness to all who believe." And this is just what the sinking soul wants. Condemned by the law, and feeling that we are impotent to remove or escape from that condemnation, a sight of the cross dispels our fears, and inspires us with hope. We see that Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour, and just such a Saviour as we need. We feel that God only could have devised this plan of salvation,—so wise, so just, so merciful — so exactly suited to our case,—we feel it, with a certainty to which we had hitherto been strangers.

We prize our religious hopes, also, more highly than we were wont to do in days of health. Lying in our darkened chamber, we reflect that the haunts of business and pleasure, and the paths to honor are crowded still, though we are withdrawn from them; and that, with the ex-

ception of a few friends, the world will leave us to sicken, and suffer, and die, alone. We find, too, that neither stoicism nor philosophy can soothe our fears, or meet the necessities and desires of our souls. We feel the need of a friend who will never leave or forsake us, of consolations such as God only can supply. And these we find offered to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ! Though everything else may fail us, we turn to its provisions and promises, and our souls are satisfied and put at rest. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Oh! how precious, how inexpressibly valuable, do such promises and declarations appear. All that the world can give, seems now of no comparative importance.

Suffer me to refer to one more lesson of sickness, namely, that a period of suffering and decline is a most unfavorable season for making preparation for death. It is no trifling thing to

make such a preparation. The subjects to be considered are the most momentous which can possibly engage human attention; and the interests at stake are greater than finite mind can conceive. But he who defers this matter to a time of sickness, defers it to what is, ordinarily, the most unpropitious moment of his life that could be selected. The mind often sympathises with the body, and is unable, in the midst of pains, and torpor, and delirium, to apply itself suitably to the things which concern its everlasting peace. At such times, we need to *have in possession* the comforts and supports of religion, not to be goaded by necessity to *seek for* them. A good hope in Jesus Christ *may be* secured even then; but, as a general rule, the piety of sick and dying beds is to be distrusted. It lacks the very important evidence of fruit. As one has expressed it: "Sickness is a discipline which we must live to improve; a medicine whose operation cannot be ascertained, if the patient dies in the experiment." If it is a hazardous thing to put to sea in a vessel hastily built, and that has never been tested, it is more perilous to push out upon the ocean of eternity with "a hope" caught up amid the languor and distraction of

sickness, and with no opportunity to try its genuineness. If it is a solemn thing to die, with the most careful preparation, it is more solemn, yea, it is dreadful, to die with such a *perhaps* as to our spiritual state in the sight of God.

Such, my friend, are some of the more obvious lessons of sickness. Others might be mentioned, but your own reflections will suggest them. Now, is it hard to see that there is wisdom and mercy in a dispensation which teaches such lessons? If your recent affliction has deepened your convictions of the frailty of life and the uncertainty of human hopes, and the unsatisfactory nature of earthly good, and so led you to seek more earnestly for spiritual life, and for those things which are of unchanging value; if you have become more humble, more grateful, and more thoroughly persuaded of the truth and the value of religion; if it has become your heart's desire and prayer to God that your friends should come to Christ without delay,—then, surely, you can and you ought to say, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.” I doubt not, my friend, that we shall hereafter look back upon our times of sickness as among the golden periods of our lives. Oh! let us so improve the

discipline we have already experienced, that we shall be prepared for trials yet to come. Nothing but a high degree of faith and of devotion to God can sustain us in adversity, and enable us to meet it with composure and cheerful resignation and hope. When other afflictions befall us, let them not find us as thoughtless and worldly as we have hitherto been. And when our last sickness comes, let it not surprise us in the midst of unholy pursuits and pleasures, or drag us out of the world, with our hands reaching back for its baubles of wealth and pleasure and fame. Rather, let it find us prepared for its approach, and able to give it welcome: able to say, Come on, not as men too often view thee, a spirit of darkness but as an angel of light. I have long waited for thy coming, thou messenger of God, sent to conduct me away from this world of pain, and languishing, and fear, and sin, to a world of perfect health, and holiness, and joy.

FEARS OF DEATH.

DEATH! Who does not fear it! Man must become something more or less than human, not to tremble at its presence. This fear has respect to the pain of dying, the sundering of domestic and social ties, the giving up of all earthly joys, pursuits and hopes; the darkness and corruption of the grave, and the solemn revelations of the judgment and eternity. In view of one or all these considerations, man shrinks back from death: he dreads to look into the darkness before him, and often tries to banish from his mind all thoughts of dying, by the contemplation of vain and frivolous things, or he sinks into despair.

"The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment can lay on man,
Is paradise to what we fear of death."

This aversion to death is, in a great degree, natural to man: the devoutest Christian cannot wholly rise above it. And yet, there is reason

to believe that many persons suffer from imaginary fears on this subject ; they are all their life-time the victims of a self-imposed bondage on account of it, and in the hour of sickness and decline find their tranquillity disturbed, their resolution weakened, and their hopes beclouded. This being so, it may not be unprofitable for us to inquire, briefly, into the ground of this fear. Especially, in regard to the pain of dying, and the darkness and corruption of the grave, we think a few plain considerations may relieve some needless anxieties.

It is a settled principle among physiologists, (so a medical friend informs us,) that in order to a person's experiencing pain, those nerves which ordinarily convey the sensation of touch, must possess their natural sensibility. When, for example, a limb is paralyzed, and thus the tenderness of those nerves is destroyed, one may puncture the part affected without producing pain. Now, it is the nature of disease to diminish the sensibility of the nervous system, so that when death itself intervenes, the pain of dissolution is comparatively slight.

Since men commonly struggle when in distress of any kind, many infer that death is ne-

cessarily painful, because most persons struggle in the hour of its approach. But this conclusion is incorrect, because such movements of the body are merely muscular, and often take place when the subject is totally unconscious of them. "Decapitate an animal, and the body will struggle for a considerable time, though the head, which is the seat of consciousness, is entirely separated from it. Very commonly, convulsions occur in cases of apoplexy, and when some injury has been done to the brain, long after consciousness has been suspended. Within a certain period after death, those struggles and contortions of the countenance which are associated in the mind with the most excruciating pain, can be excited by the application of galvanism." We have the testimony of persons recovered from the brink of the grave, that, while their friends stood about them pitying their sufferings, their existence was a mere blank. Montaigne, when stunned by a fall from his horse, tore open his clothes, and exhibited other signs of distress, but it afterwards appeared that he was senseless at the time, and knew what he had experienced and done, only as informed by his friends.

Many persons having endured extreme pain without dying, infer that life could not be entirely destroyed, without causing still greater suffering. But if disease benumbs the nervous sensibility as it advances, its progress will not bring increasing pain. Those who die from fevers, and many other diseases, suffer their greatest distress hours, days, and sometimes weeks before the event of dissolution. "Those who faint from the loss of a little blood, or on any other occasion, have already experienced all the pain they ever would, did they not again revive." Persons who have been recovered from drowning, have described their sensations immediately before they became unconscious, as but little painful, and yet, had they never been restored, they would have suffered no more. Fontenelle, the poet, in allusion to his increasing infirmities shortly before death, wittily remarked that he was about to decamp, and had sent his heavy baggage on before. So, in sober fact, it often is : that which is most distressing in dissolution, is over before the hour of death comes. The cases in which dying is exceedingly painful, are those, generally, in which life is taken away without a previous destruction of the nervous

system. But in a great majority of these and other instances, the pains of dissolution are over-rated. In respect to death from consumption, a pleasing writer has observed: "Consumptive patients are sometimes in a dying state for several days; they appear at such times to suffer little, but to languish for complete dissolution; nay, I have known them to express great uneasiness when they have been recalled from the commencement of insensibility by the cries of their friends, or the efforts of their attendants to arouse them. In observing persons in this situation, I have always been impressed with an idea that the approach of actual death produces a sensation similar to that of falling asleep. The disturbance of respiration is the only apparent source of weariness to the dying; and sensibility seems to be impaired in exact proportion to the decrease of that function. Besides, both the impressions of present objects and those recalled by memory, are influenced by the extreme debility of the patient, whose wish is for absolute rest. I could never see the close of life under these circumstances, without recalling those beautiful lines of Spenser:

'Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas,
Ease after war, death after life, doth greatly please.'

And what is commonly true of this disease, is so likewise of many others. "If I had strength enough to hold a pen," said William Hunter, "I would write how easy and delightful it is to die." "If this be dying," said the niece of John Newton, "it is a pleasant thing to die." And this excellent man himself tells us that he watched his dying wife some hours, with a candle in his hand, and when he was sure she had breathed her last,—which could not at once be determined, she died so imperceptibly,—he knelt down and thanked the Lord for her peaceful dismissal. "If this be dying, it is the easiest thing imaginable," said Lady Glenorchy. "I thought that dying had been more difficult," said Louis XIV. Testimony of this sort might be collected sufficient to cover many pages. The Foreign Quarterly Review for December, 1849, (to which the writer would hereby acknowledge his indebtedness,) contains an interesting account of the death of the son of Edmund Burke, a part of which we here quote: "Hearing his parents sobbing in another room, at the prospect of an event they knew to be inevitable, he rose from his bed, joined his illustrious father, and endeavored to engage him in a cheerful conversation.

Burke continued silent, choked with grief. His son made an effort to console him. 'I am under no terror,' he said, 'I feel myself better, and in spirits, and yet my heart flutters, I know not why. Pray, talk to me, sir! talk of religion; talk of morality; talk, if you will, of indifferent subjects.' Here, a voice attracted his notice, and he exclaimed, 'Does it rain? No, it is the rustling of the wind through the trees.' The whistling of the wind and the waving of the trees brought Milton's majestic lines to his mind, and he repeated them with uncommon grace and effect:

'His praise, ye winds that from four quarters blow,
Breathe soft or loud; and wave your tops, ye pines;
With every plant, in sign of worship wave!'

"A second time he took up the sublime and melodious strain, and accompanying the action to the word, waved his own hand in token of worship, and sunk into the arms of his father — a corpse. Not a sensation told him that in an instant he would stand in the presence of the Creator to whom his body was bent in homage, and whose praises still resounded from his lips. But commonly, the hand of death is felt for one brief moment before the work is done."

From considerations and examples like the foregoing, there is, plainly, no foundation for the popular belief that the extinction of life is uniformly painful. Doubtless, most persons suffer severer pain in some of the various sicknesses to which they are subject in the course of life, and in some surgical operations, than they will, in "the article of death." We read that the venerable Thomas Fuller, having considered the various ways in which life is destroyed, came to this short and decisive conclusion, "None please me. But away with these thoughts," the good man adds, "the mark must not choose what arrow shall be shot against it." We are not permitted to decide by what manner of death we will die, and it is well that we are not. But there is this consolation, that as a general rule, the fear of dying is more distressing than the reality.

Moreover, in the weariness and pains of our sickness, and in our forebodings of the dying hour, it is well for us who hope in Christ to remember that in his death, he drank a far bitterer cup than it can be our lot to taste. There was the driving of the spikes through his hands and feet, the fever which ensued, and an intolerable

thirst, and then the rankling of his wounds caused by every attempt to writhe under his sufferings, and all prolonged until death released him from his agonies. His life was destroyed by violence, in the vigor of his manhood and perfect health, with his nervous energies unimpaired: consequently, it was a most painful death. Let us be thankful that it is not appointed us to follow him in the mode of his dying, and that he was willing to undergo such sufferings in order to extract the sting from death in our behalf, and to give us victory over the grave!

It was remarked on a former page, that many persons fear death because of the loathsomeness of the grave, and other painful associations connected with it. For example, some, having heard of instances in which it was supposed other persons were interred before actual death, fear lest it may be so, eventually, with them. But a careful investigation of this matter has convinced men of science and observation, that such cases are exceedingly rare. There are certain well-understood signs of death, which are almost unmistakable, and corpses are seldom buried until some of these have been developed.

Because some bodies, on being exhumed, have been found with their position somewhat changed, it has been hastily inferred that life was not extinct when they were buried. But it is well known that in the natural progress of decomposition, the muscular fibers of one side or portion of the body frequently relax sooner than the other, and cause the body to be drawn slightly out of its original position. Moreover, such changes in the position of a corpse are often chargeable to the mistakes or carelessness of pall-bearers in carrying the coffin, or in depositing it in the tomb. There is little reason, we think, for any one to harass his mind with apprehensions on this point.

Again, many persons trouble themselves with the thought that their bodies will become "the food of worms." They might be so troubled, justly, perhaps, were there any ground for this popular notion. But the most eminent physicians tell us that there is nothing in the nature of the human body to indicate that worms prey upon the buried corpse. If properly interred, it decays, and literally returns to the dust from which it was taken. In confirmation of this, it is well known that when bodies long buried are

exhumed, they are commonly found with all the features perfect, though on exposure to the air, they crumble in pieces. The fact that we read in Scripture: "Though after my skin *worms destroy this body*," &c., (Job 19: 26,) is no proof that the body is the victim of such ravages. The word "*worms*" does not appear in the original Hebrew, but is supplied by our translators, and that without any semblance of reason; — so the best expositors declare. The same superstition is referred to in the familiar lines of the poet:

"The deep, damp vault, the darkness and the worm."

If, therefore, this idea has no foundation in truth, let us banish it, and all other imaginary fears from our minds. To die, is a solemn and momentous thing enough, without its being invested with unreal terrors. Especially, if we are the followers of Christ, and thus partake of the benefits of his sufferings, what reason have we for fear? He "took part of flesh and blood, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage." In entering the tomb, we do but follow in his foot-

steps: we sleep where his precious body once reposed. If death were more dreadful than we know it to be, it would be unchristian in us to shrink and tremble at the thought of its approach. God has promised that he will never leave nor forsake his children; that he will be their refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; that he will strengthen them on the bed of languishing; that he will be their guide even unto death; and that when they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he will be with them, and his rod and staff shall comfort them. Has God forsaken you, Christian reader, in the trials you have hitherto been called to encounter? Does he not support you now? You cannot be so thankless as to say, Nay. Then why not confide in him for the future? Do not grieve him by your ingratitude, and by your distrust of his faithfulness. Leave future trials where God has placed them, *in the future*. “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” Cast to the winds your doubts and fears. He that believeth, shall not be confounded. Entrust yourself,—and oh! rejoice that you may so entrust—your soul and body in his good hands, for the present and for the future, and be happy

in him. And whenever death shall come, it will be less painful than you had feared ; and in addition to this, you will find the Saviour by the side of your dying pillow, and he will accompany you in every step of your way through the dark valley.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

YOUR last letter refers to a subject of the greatest importance. You say that being in declining health, your thoughts have lately been directed, in an uncommon degree, to the future world, and to your preparation for it. The great inquiry with you now seems to be: *Am I a Christian?* Have I experienced that spiritual change without which no man can see the kingdom of God? As you desire faithful counsel on this subject, I will mention some of the evidences of a religious character, which intelligent and devout Christians regard as most scriptural and decisive. Such a character, you most truly say, is the essential preparation for life or for death.

I need hardly remind you that it is no mark of a Christian for one to have felt, at a certain time, great alarm on account of his sins and of his exposure to the wrath of God, and to have

had such fears followed by emotions of joy ; or that he formerly had great zeal for religion, and was regarded by others as truly pious ; or that during some particular period of doubt and anxiety, his eyes happened to fall upon certain passages of Scripture which assured him of salvation ; or that he has had strange dreams and unaccountable impressions and impulses, and seen wonderful visions. These and similar things *may* sometimes enter into the experience of Christians, but they are not scriptural evidences of piety. And it is a matter of common observation, that many persons in whom they once appeared, have afterwards proved too plainly, that they were destitute of true religion.

Without dwelling on this point, however, let me say that one distinctive mark of a Christian may be found in his views and feelings concerning sin. An irreligious man may be as well informed as he, respecting the nature and consequences of sin, but he has no heartfelt, practical conviction of its vileness and ill-desert, nor of his duty to repent of it. The mind of the Christian is not engrossed, it is true, with fear of the punishment his sins deserve ; but he thinks often, and with a humble, penitent heart, of the

righteous law he has broken, of the Fatherly goodness he has abused, and the compassion of a Saviour he has returned so long with ingratitude and unbelief, if not with scorn. His sins appear odious in every aspect; he mourns over them, he devoutly prays God to forgive them, and makes it his constant endeavor to turn from them, and to lead a holy life.

This penitent, filial disposition of the true child of God, has often been illustrated * in this way: Suppose you have a child who frequently disobeys your commands, and neglects the duties you require of him; yet, if this neglect and disobedience seems to proceed from thoughtlessness, rather than from a rebellious disposition, and if he appears sincerely penitent, and every day comes and tells you, with tears in his eyes, "Father, I love you; I am sorry that I have done wrong; I am ashamed of myself, and wonder that you have patience to bear with me;"—you will love and forgive such a child, and feel that there is hope of his reformation. But, should he say, or could you read the feeling in his heart, "Father, I cannot love you; I have never felt one emotion of love towards you, and

* By Dr. Payson and other writers.

I have no wish to obey your commands ;"—you would say, his case is hopeless ; there is nothing left for me to work upon ; no penitence, no affection, no desire to do right.

There is another thought, suggested by the very name of the Christian, viz : his relation to Christ. He believes in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Deeply sensible of his guilt, and of his utter dependence on the mercy of God, he renounces all other hopes, and cordially accepts the terms of salvation offered in the gospel. Christ is his only refuge, his only hope and comfort. The plan of redemption is, in his view, the perfection of wisdom and love ; and he desires to be saved in no other way. Christ is precious to him, above the power of language to express. To his merciful, faithful and all-powerful hands, he joyfully commits his soul and all his interests, for time and for eternity. Such a faith brings him into peace with God, and entitles him to all the privileges of God's children. Having this, he is equally prepared to live or to die.

When President Dwight, having been raised from the borders of the grave, appeared again, for the first time in his pulpit, he declared to

his hearers, with deep solemnity, that "the mercy of God, as exercised towards our lost race, through the righteousness of the Redeemer, yielded him the only foundation of hope for good beyond the grave." Robert Hall said of himself, in similar circumstances: "Filled with an overflowing sense of my unworthiness, my mind was supported merely by a faith in Christ crucified. *I would not for the world have parted with that text, 'The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.'*" And such has been the testimony of thousands, in every walk of life. A simple, self-renouncing faith in Jesus Christ, lies at the basis of the Christian character; and is, consequently, the basis of a true preparation for death.

And here, my friend, I might properly close this letter; for we are told that "whosoever believeth, shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." "God does not bring a pair of scales," says an old divine, "to weigh your graces, and if they be too light, refuseth them; but he brings a touchstone to try them, and if they be pure gold, though ever so little of it, it will pass current with him." Suffer me then to ask, dear sir, whether you sin-

cerely repent of sin, and believe in Christ as your only Saviour. If so, you are a child of God, and nothing can harm you, in life or in death.

But repentance and faith are uniformly accompanied by other traits of Christian character. For example: a supreme regard for the glory of God. The true believer's daily prayer is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He cheerfully gives up everything that conflicts with the known will of God. Whatever may be the opinions or practices of other men, he stands forth on the Lord's side; casts his property, his talents, his influence, his all, into the scale of religion, and makes the promotion of Christ's cause the leading object of his life. He is deeply pained whenever he hears the name, or character, or word of God dishonored, and he rejoices from his inmost soul, whenever, and by whomsoever he sees God glorified.

Again; a Christian is distinguished by love for the people of God. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The Christian cherishes a love of benevolence towards all men, but he feels a love of complacency for those only who

bear the image of Christ. He loves them simply because they love God. Other things being the same, he prefers their society and conversation and friendship to that of worldly men ; and he loves them the more, in proportion as they exhibit the real excellencies of the Christian character.

Let me observe, also, that the Christian makes progress in religious attainments. If you examine the various similitudes by which a life of piety is set forth in scripture, you will see in them all, conspicuously, the idea of progress, *progress*. The Christian does not stand still in his course, any more than the growing grain, or the traveler, or the warrior, or the ascending sun, to each of which he is likened. His religious advancement may not be always uniform, or rapid ; but his life, taken as a whole, indicates improvement. The principles of piety become more and more firmly established in his heart, and his life becomes more and more conformed to the pattern of the gospel.

I will mention one other evidence of Christian character, viz : an impartial and cheerful obedience to the requirements of the gospel. Faith without works is dead. If we love God, he

himself says, we will keep his commandments. And our obedience must be impartial. "Ye are my friends," said Christ, "*if ye do whatsoever* I command you." Accordingly, we have no right to select certain duties which are comparatively easy and agreeable to perform, and then neglect all others. Read attentively the parable of the young ruler, for a most impressive illustration of this truth. We must obey those precepts of the Bible which have reference to God, as well as those which respect men ; those which humble our pride, and conflict with our natural inclinations, and require self-denial and sacrifice, as well as those which suit our taste, and make no special trial of faith and patience.

This obedience, moreover, must be cheerfully rendered. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and *his commandments are not grievous.*" Ah! here is the mark of God's children ; they keep his commandments, not from compulsion, nor from a mercenary spirit, but *because they love to keep them.* They delight in his law after the inner man.

Such, my friend, are some of the scriptural and most decisive evidences of piety. They

may not all appear with the same distinctness in every Christian, but they will not be wholly wanting in any. A poor and illiterate woman once applied to Dr. Chalmers for admission to membership in his church, but she appeared so weak-minded, and so ignorant of the cardinal doctrines of the Bible, that he dismissed her. She rose to go away, but lingered a while at the door, and then turning to the minister with tears in her eyes, said : "Master, I cannot speak well for my Saviour, but I could die for him." Chalmers at once called her back, and after a little further conversation, told her she could unite with the church on the following Sabbath. And so it is : constitutional traits, education, and various other circumstances give prominence to different features of Christian character ; and yet, wherever genuine piety exists, it will manifest itself by some unmistakable tokens.

I trust, dear sir, that a faithful examination will discover to you some such tokens in yourself. If, indeed, as you say, your sins distress you, do not brood over them despairingly, but go at once to Christ for forgiveness. Go, just as you are, to be made what you should be. "Be not afraid, only believe," said Christ ; and

why should you distrust his promises? Make yourself over, wholly and forever, to him. Appropriate the provisions of the gospel by an unwavering faith. Go forward in discharge of all your duties. Then you will have nothing more to desire or to fear. You will be prepared for life and for death. If God prolong your days and give you prosperity, you can receive them thankfully, and use them as his gifts. If sickness and manifold trials are sent upon you, you will be sustained under them, and be sanctified by them. And when death comes, you will be enabled to meet it with composure; you will welcome it as God's angel, sent to bear you above this world of sin and woe, to a world of holiness and everlasting felicity. Your life being hid with Christ in God, when He who is your life shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory.

"It matters little at what hour of day
The righteous fall asleep. Death cannot come
To him untimely, who is fit to die;
The less of this cold world, the more of heaven;
The briefer life, the earlier immortality."

TO DIE IS GAIN.

“To die is gain.” So said the apostle Paul. But is it really so? At least, can I say so, without presumption, and in sober truth and sincerity? I would not speak thus, simply because some other person has made such a declaration. I might say so, indeed, in a moment of impatience or despair, when frustrated in my plans, disappointed in my hopes, or when worn down by sickness, or when the world seems, in every view of it, barren of good. Judas, while hurrying forth to hang himself, thought it were better to die than to live; and so have all suicides thought. But this was not the spirit of Paul. With a heart full of love to God and man, grateful for the mercies he had received, and content to live so long as God should appoint, he, nevertheless, soberly, honestly thought it would be an advantage to depart and be with Christ.

Nor is he alone in this matter. Job says: “All the days of my appointed time will I *wait*,

till my change come." Peter, also, speaks with composure and cheerful hope, of the time when he should "put off this tabernacle, as the Lord Jesus had showed him." And John, looking forward to the coming of his Saviour, exclaims with joyful expectation: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Why, then, should not I consider it better to die than to live? So long as I remain in this world, I shall be exposed to suffering. Sickness, weariness, pain and various infirmities are the earthly portion of all men, in a greater or less degree; and these things, certainly, are not in themselves to be desired. Would it not be an advantage to be free from all mental suffering,—all anxiety, care, disappointment and fear? And I shall be, as soon as I leave this mortal scene.

Would there not be a gain, too, in the matter of society? God has given me many friends in this world, whose fellowship I highly prize, and for which I would be thankful. But the best of men are imperfect, and the great majority of mankind are such as the Christian cannot associate with, without injury and pain. I know, indeed, that I ought to try to make the world better, instead

of seeking a premature release from it. May God grant me grace so to do. But when his appointed time for my departure shall come, will it not be a desirable thing to turn away from the envy, selfishness, jealousy, pride, strife, irreligion and crime which abound here on every hand? Verily it would be a blessed thing to be admitted into the society of heaven; to see the throng of holy men who have been redeemed from every nation and kindred and tongue and people; to stand by the side of Abraham and David and Isaiah, and Paul and Luther, and the saints of all ages; to hold communion with angels, and with the adorable Saviour himself!

And then, there would be the blessed gain of freedom from sin. Freedom from that which now draws me away from God,—which corrupts my soul and fills it with sorrow; freedom from unbelief and pride and ingratitude. I should be where God is, glorious in his holiness, where every heart beats in perfect love to him, where all my thoughts and desires, my enjoyments and employments would be holy.

Now, I cannot deny the force of considerations like these. *My judgment* is convinced that it is better for a Christian to depart and be with

Christ, than to live. And yet, so weak is my faith, that when I look abroad on this beautiful world, my *heart* clings to it, loth to give it up. But a heavenly Voice seems to whisper to my heart, saying: Beautiful and attractive as this world is, the world of glory far surpasses it. *That* has more resplendent skies, fairer landscapes, forms of more transcendent majesty and loveliness, and is vocal with sweeter music. Rest assured that whatever is beautiful and good on earth, is only a type, a faint shadow, of something infinitely better in heaven. You have not yet seen the greatest and best of God's works; that sight is reserved for you in a better country, even an heavenly.

But my faint heart shrinks back again, saying: Would that I were more confident of my acceptance with God;—then I might be more willing to stand before him. The Voice replies: Ah! you *ought* to be more confident. It is your privilege, and your duty, to enjoy a full assurance of hope; to rejoice continually in the firm persuasion that nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

But again my heart responds: Here are kindred and friends around me, and here is the

church of Christ, for whose welfare I feel the deepest interest; how can I turn away from them! The Voice answers: God has promised to take care of your kindred; do not doubt his word. And if you are utterly unwilling to be separated from your friends, remember that Christ says: "He that loveth father or mother, wife or children more than me, is not worthy of me." And as to your being withdrawn from labors for the good of the church and the world, do not indulge such an idea. Your example and your prayers and your efforts hitherto will survive you. And your departure from the world may be so ordered that it will be of more service to others than your life would be, though it were prolonged many years.

Oh! do not cling to this world with such a tenacious grasp. It does not deserve your idolatry. Look upward. There is something better, oh! infinitely better than this life, or God would not remove his children from it by death. Good as the present world is, there is a better to come. Think more about that; bring it near, and make it an acknowledged and delightful reality. Let your affections fasten upon it; let its rest, its holiness, its joys, its glory so fill your thoughts

that you will really live above the world, while you live in it; that, though you may be willing to live and labor, or suffer, so long as God appoints, yet, when the time of your release comes, you will be enabled to leave the world without regret, yea, choosing rather to depart and be present with the Lord.

“One hour, and the dark storm goes by;
One step, and on the heavenly shore,
You stand beneath a cloudless sky,
And drink in joy forevermore.”

THE PILGRIMS NEAR THE END OF THEIR JOURNEY.

HAVING, in former days, met and conversed with pilgrims to the heavenly Jerusalem, I thought it might be interesting and profitable to discourse with them, also, as they approached the end of their journey. I had observed that they differed much in spirit and deportment. One was desponding, and faint with his travels. To him the road seemed rugged, and beset with a thousand obstacles; clouds and storms darkened his prospects; he feared he should not hold out unto the end.

Another was of a more cool and philosophical habit of mind. Difficulties surrounded him; but instead of being daunted by them, he occupied himself in speculating about the cause of their existence; and, indeed, about the cause of difficulty in general. He wondered why God had induced him to undertake this pilgrimage, while many others were left to pursue the road to destruction; and he declared to all he met, that

unless a divine Voice had called him, he should never have entered the way of life, but that since God had set his feet heavenward, he was certain to persevere.

Another was a more cheerful, hopeful spirit. Doubts and fears seldom troubled him. His thoughts were rarely occupied about the freedom of man's will, the sovereignty of God, and the origin of sin and evil. He simply knew that there was much sin in the world, and in his own soul, and he was very desirous to have it exterminated from both. But he reflected that God reigned, and so he went on his way rejoicing. As he journeyed, he was wont to ascend the hills for a wider view of the country through which he was passing, and he often looked away toward the River of Death, and caught glimpses of the glories outspread beyond it. He loved to recount daily how much his heavenly Father had done to make pilgrims happy. Every ray of sunlight on his path, the carol of birds, the bubbling spring, the various places of rest and refreshment by the wayside,—these all filled his heart with gratitude and joy.

Then there were still other pilgrims, as various, indeed, in character as their dispositions,

education, age and other circumstances, would naturally serve to make them. They were all true pilgrims, and yet they exhibited traits of character as dissimilar as their faces. As I noticed this thing from time to time, the inspired saying rose to my mind, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of operations; but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

Having observed these things in former days, when the pilgrims were in the midst of their journey, or had just set out upon it, I felt desirous to see whether the same diversities of character would be exhibited at their approach to the end of their pilgrimage. Accordingly, I placed myself on the shore of the River of Death, within sight of the celestial city, and watched them as they successively came up to this termination of their journey. I soon detected the same peculiarities that I had noticed before. The trials and the varied experience of the remainder of their pilgrimage had indeed wrought changes in them all, and generally for the better, but they still appeared as unlike as formerly.

Here were fearful, desponding pilgrims. A few of them were as disconsolate as in former

days; they trembled and grew pale with terror, as they came up to the river and looked into its turbid waters. "Alas!" said one of them, "I fear my faith and hope will fail me. I shall be left to deny my Saviour. It cannot be that I shall ever reach heaven."

Others, who had been easily and often cast down during their journey, and who had looked forward to Death with gloomy forebodings, now came up to it with composure. They were surprised to find the dreaded stream so smooth and so narrow: they felt themselves sustained by an invisible Hand, and so near and enchanting was the view across the river, that they thought but little of what lay between. They chided themselves for their former want of faith in God's promises, and sent back word to their friends on the way, saying, "Fear not, neither be afraid; only trust in the Lord. Ye shall not fall one day by the hand of Saul, nor be overwhelmed in death." One of them, in particular, exclaimed to those about him, "Behold in me a demonstration of the reality and power of faith and godliness! I, once a poor, weak and timorous man,—once as much afraid of death as any one—I, who was many years under the terrors of death,

do come, in the mercy of God, and by the power of his grace, composedly and with joy, to look death in the face. Oh! sirs, I could not have believed that I could bear, and bear cheerfully, as I have done, the toils and sufferings of this pilgrimage, and now take its last step without fear.” *

On looking still further, I saw an anxious, trembling pilgrim, who had seldom been known to tremble before. He now mourned that he had turned aside so often during his journey hitherward, to parley with those who were going in an opposite direction; that he had occupied so much of his time and thoughts with things which did not properly concern pilgrims; and had done so little to encourage his fellow-travelers, or to induce others to journey with him. Doubts and fears haunted him continually. “Can God forgive me?” he said to his companions. “Will he not treat me now, as I have hitherto treated him? Will he hold me up,—alas! why should he not desert me amid the swellings of Jordan?” And in this despairing mood he went from one to another, seeking consolation; and so I lost sight of him.

* Halyburton.

There was another desponding pilgrim; desponding, because he did not experience such raptures, and behold such ecstatic visions as he had expected near the end of his journey. His fears, however, were soon allayed, on recollecting that God had not promised such things to his children; that though some, either from peculiar constitutional traits, or by the special providence of God, were made the subjects of such experience, yet, that those who were not, might have equally good title to heaven. He learned that God had simply promised never to leave or forsake those who trusted in him; to deliver them from every foe, and bring them safe to the celestial city.

Shortly after these fearful ones had passed by, there came up a pilgrim of a different character. He was little moved by what he saw before or around him. He believed that God had called him to enter upon this journey, and would surely enable him to complete it. From the time he entered upon it, he had steadily pursued his way heavenward, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left,—seldom elated, seldom cast down,—habitually absorbed in contemplation of God's character and government and purpo-

ses, and willing to leave all things to his sovereign control. And so now, as he descended to the brink of the river, there was a settled composure on his face, and his feelings were summed up in his parting words, "The Lord reigneth ; I am content."

Next, I observed some more joyous pilgrims. They had passed through many dangers, but had now forgotten them all. Their tears were tears of joy. Their faces beamed with light reflected from the celestial city, at which they were intently looking. Said one of them, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ." And another, "I am fast going to a crown of glory."* And another, "Oh! help me to praise God. I have now nothing else to do. I have done with prayer, and all other ordinances. Before a few hours are over, I shall be in eternity, singing the song of Moses and the Lamb."† "This is heaven begun," exclaimed another.‡ And another, "My soul breathes after God. When shall I come to God, my exceeding joy."§ And another, pointing to the distant shores, exclaimed with holy rapture, "Forever with the Lord!

* St. Augustine. † Janeway. ‡ Dr. Scott. § David Brainerd.

Forever with the Lord."* And still another, "The celestial city is in full view. Its glories beam upon me, its breezes fan me, its odors are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the River of Death, which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. . . . Victory, victory, peace, peace."†

As I continued to watch the throng of pilgrims passing by, I noticed others of a still different character. They approached the end of their journey, not without emotion, indeed, but without fear. They felt unworthy of the name of pilgrims to the heavenly city, and unworthy of the rewards promised them at the end of their journey; but they had long ago given up expecting to feel worthy of their privileges; they ascribed all to Christ, and depended on him for every blessing. And now, as they went down to the margin of the river, it was with entire self-distrust, but with undoubting reliance upon the promise of God, saying, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I

* Robert Haldane. † Dr. Payson.

will fear no evil,—for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” One aged traveler had forgotten the names of even familiar things seen during his journey. His own name was spoken, but he replied, “I know not the man.” Mention was made of his beloved and only son, but he replied, “I have no son.” At length, a friend spoke of the Redeemer of men. The venerable pilgrim suddenly raised himself upon his staff, and with kindling eyes, exclaimed, “I remember the Saviour; yes, I do remember the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Another said, “I find myself to have been full of sin, ignorance, weakness, unfaithfulness and guilt. But Jesus is my hope. Washed in his blood, justified by his righteousness, sanctified by his grace, I have peace with God. This is my testimony.”† And another, of kindred spirit, declared, “I feel utterly unworthy and sinful, but hope to be saved through the blood of Christ. I can commit my immortal all to him; and I wish here to bear my final testimony, that I go down into the river before me trusting in no one but the Saviour. Without him, I should have no hope or comfort.”‡

* Rev. Dr. Cogswell. † Dr. Bedell. ‡ Dr. Cornelius.

And this, for substance, was the language of the great majority of the pilgrims whom I beheld. "I have no raptures," said one and another, "but I have peace, I have peace." There was no abrupt and striking dissimilarity between the testimony of their life in the midst and at the end of their pilgrimage. They appeared and spoke as they were wont to appear and to speak, though it may have been with more composure and solemnity. Their joys and raptures were reserved for the better country to which they were traveling. God supported them in crossing the stream of death, and admitted them at once to the heavenly city.

I should not omit to speak, here, of some who finished their pilgrimage without leaving behind them any special declaration of their views and feelings at its close. One or two were strangely caught up by angels, and borne across the river without touching its cold and turbid waters. But of the others, to whom I now refer, the greater part had no need to make any final confession of their faith; for their spirit and conversation throughout the journey furnished sufficient evidence that they loved God and were beloved of him. If they gave no such parting

testimony, it was because they were exhausted by the toils of their journey, or because their senses were weakened and stupefied by the chilling vapors of the valley into which they were entering.

These pilgrims, of such various characters, were composed of persons of all ages. One tottered by, leaning on his staff, whose hoary head seemed a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness. There was also the man of middle life; and the youth, whom God permitted to terminate his pilgrimage early, and to enter into rest. And there, too, were children and lisping infants, looking up to the celestial gates, whose coming seemed in obedience to the Saviour's invitation, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

As I stood thus, and beheld the throng of travelers approaching the end of their pilgrimage, I felt that the ground on which I stood was holy. Here had passed by all the chosen of God from among men, on their way to heaven. Here were the footprints of Noah, and David, and Paul, and Luther, and all of like precious faith. Here was their last intercourse with the world; where

earthly companions bade them adieu, and angels and the Saviour came and met them, and bore them safe to heaven.

It was a delightful, as well as holy place. A golden radiance spread over all nature, and balmy odors filled the air. The pilgrims, too, with hardly an exception, were cheerful and full of hope. Their conversation was pleasing, elevated and comforting. Frequently their hearts ran over with joy, and they made the valley resound with music. And in the intervals of their songs, one could hear sweet harmonies from the other side of the river.

While witnessing these things, I could not but reflect that there was *another* road, at the termination of which a widely different scene was presented. *There* were doubt, and fear, and remorse, and despair, or blind and fatal presumption. There were darkness and horror, rebellion and cursing and blasphemy; the beginning of sorrows in the world of everlasting woe. But around me were peace, and hope, and faith, and joy; the faint beginnings of endless and ever-increasing glory.

As I bade some of the pilgrims farewell, upon the shore of the river, I could not but congratu-

late them upon the happy close of their journey. Hail! blessed spirits, I give ye joy! Go, at the Saviour's call, and be forever with the Lord! God grant me, in his own good time, as safe a termination of my pilgrimage, and an entrance through the gates into the city.

DEATH FOLLOWED BY ETERNAL LIFE.

"Oh! who but must pine in this dark vale of tears,
From its clouds and its shadows to go!
To walk in the light of the glory above,
And to share in the peace, and the joy, and the love,
Of the land which no mortal may know."

LIVING, as we do, in a world of sin, of sorrow, and of death, it is cheering to reflect that there remaineth a rest for the people of God. Without this sustaining hope we could not well endure the trials of life, but with it they can be patiently borne, death itself can be met without fear, and the soul be made eager to depart and be with Christ, deeming it far better than to live. And yet, we know but imperfectly what heaven is. God in his wisdom has concealed it in a great measure from our view, disclosing only enough to awaken our desires and hopes, to cheer our sorrows, and to animate us in making preparation for it.

If the thoughts of a devout and intelligent

Christian in meditation on the future life were to be clothed in words, they would run somewhat thus :

There are intimations in Scripture that heaven has locality — is a place. The Saviour once said to his disciples : “ I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also.” Moreover, Christ has a body, and so have Enoch and Elijah, and so will all the saints have, after the resurrection, and these bodies must occupy space, and have a local residence.

However this may be, it is certain that those who obtain eternal life will be deliveréd from all the evils incident to their present material bodies. The possession of such a body, it is true, is not in itself an evil, nor the necessary occasion of sin. Adam, when first created, had a body essentially like mine, and at the same time was perfectly holy and happy. God himself was manifest in the flesh, and that without sin. It appears, too, that the soul, though received at death into heaven, does not attain its highest glory until it re-enters the body it once inhabited. But since man has fallen, his body is encompassed with a multitude of evils. Life-time is necessarily devoted, in no small measure, to

clothing and feeding it, giving rest to its weariness, repressing its passions, guarding it from accidents, nursing it in its weakness, infirmities and decline, and all these ills are terminated by the agonies of its dissolution.

But none of these things will follow the glorified soul to heaven. When my eyes close in death, they will never more behold anything that offends; when this heart ceases to beat, it will never again be agitated with sorrow or with evil passions; nor this body, in any of its members, be racked with pain. I cannot perceive precisely how the bodies of the saints will be reconstructed, or what faculties they will possess, but it is certain that all traces and effects of sin will be removed from them, and that they will be like unto Christ's glorious body. The mind, oppressed here by the frame-work surrounding it, will there be elastic and free. Shattered reason will be restored to healthful activity. Eyes long sealed in blindness, will open upon the glories of the universe. The ear of the deaf shall be unstopped, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. The redeemed of the Lord shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the

Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Surely, it will be a great deliverance to be made free from all the evils of this life. But the Bible, if I read it aright, speaks of heaven as conferring upon its inhabitants also something more positive, a still higher glory and blessedness. The minds of glorified saints will doubtless be greatly enlarged, and their knowledge vastly increased. One of the greatest of philosophers confessed himself to be but a child in knowledge, and another, equally honored for his wisdom, declared that "what we know is finite, what we do not know is infinite." But in the life to come, the intellects of the righteous will increase in vigor, their views will become more accurate, and their knowledge more extensive. God will explain to them the mysteries of nature, of providence, and of redemption. He will reveal Himself to them, and this will be the most wonderful and delightful part of their knowledge. Him they will never find out unto perfection, but will continually discover in his nature and his attributes something ever new, something to

admire, to adore, to rejoice in through all eternity. Let the infidel * envy the dog beneath his table, and wish himself were a brute, that so he might not be immortal and responsible ; but I will rejoice that God has given me a mind which can study Him and his works, and can glorify and enjoy Him forever.

Moreover, heaven is a holy place. And God be praised that it is so ! If permitted to enter it I shall then be delivered from this body of death. I shall no longer have occasion to mourn over those sins which now tarnish my best duties,—which mar my peace and grieve the Spirit from my heart. I shall no longer be insensible to God's mercies, or distrustful of his promises, or disobedient to his commands. Well did an old divine say : “ As the Lord Jesus, when he had called Lazarus from the grave, had compassion, and could not see him wrapped in his grave-clothes, but commanded, saying, ‘ Loose him and let him go,’ so He, when he hath called us from

* Doddridge records a confession of the noted Col. Gardiner, that, while surrounded by his boon companions, and engaged in ridiculing the Bible and blaspheming God, and while toasted by his friends as the happiest man living, he was often perfectly wretched, and, in his forebodings of eternity, envied the condition of the dog sleeping under his table.

the grave of our sins and from the literal grave at the last, not suffering us to drag about us the relics of sin and corruption, will say to his angels: 'Loose them and let them go; let them go to the eternal mansions; robe them in garments of holiness, and let them be forever with the Lord.' "

How cheering the thought that on entering heaven I shall never sin again, nor be disturbed with the fear of sinning! All my thoughts, emotions, and desires, will be continually, spontaneously holy. I shall behold my Redeemer's face in righteousness, and awake satisfied with his likeness.

But there will be others to share with me in this glory and joy. Heaven is often set forth in Scripture as a social state, as a family, a general assembly, a kingdom, a feast, &c. There are passages, too, which appear to teach that kindred and friends, being kindred also in Christ, will meet and recognize each other in glory, and that their joy will be greatly enhanced by being shared together, and by their reviewing with one another all the way in which the Lord had led them. The imperfections of good men, and the follies and vices of the bad, and the manifold

sorrows of life which now mar the happiness of society, will there be unknown. The wicked will cease from troubling, and the redeemed will be perfect and immortal, and fitted in every way to be helpers together of each other's joy.

The society of heaven will be composed of persons from all ages and all parts of the world. Righteous men who lived under the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian dispensations, will then meet together and speak of the wonderful works of God. They will come from the north and the south, from the land and the sea, and be welcomed into the heavenly mansions, one in Christ Jesus, and form an harmonious and blissful society. Oh! the glorious estate of the redeemed. I wonder not that good men have at all times been transported with this view of heaven. Baxter, filled with unwonted fervor by his theme, exclaims: "We shall join with Moses in his song, with David in his psalms of praise, and with all the redeemed in the song of the Lamb forever. We shall see Enoch walking with God, Noah enjoying the end of his singularity, Job of his patience, and all the saints the end of their faith." Another heavenly-minded man writes as though he were gazing full upon

the bright throng: "The Phillippian jailer is there; and there is the Ethiopian treasurer. David has not laid aside his harp, and there is still a field for Isaac to meditate. Solomon has still the eagle eye which searches nature's nooks, and scans the infinitude of things; and Moses retains that meek aspect to which no future was anxious, and no spot suspicious, for every place and every future was filled by a covenant God."

And Bunyan surpasses himself, saying: "Now just as the gates were opened, I looked in and behold, the city shone like the sun: the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal. There were, also, of them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord. And after that they shut up the gates; which when I had seen I wished myself among them."

But what are saints and angels without the Saviour? The world without its sun. "The Lamb is the light thereof." All eyes are fixed on his radiant form; all hearts burn to adore him; all lips speak his praise. Oh! who can adequately express their holy transport as they

stand in the actual presence of Him whom they had hitherto known only as they had read of him, or beheld in his works, or seen by an unsteady faith; the Being who had died for them, and risen from the dead in their behalf, and sent his spirit to renew and sanctify their hearts; who had borne with and forgiven their waywardness and follies; who had sustained them in all the trials of their earthly pilgrimage, and brought them safe to heaven! As they gaze upon his glorified body, still bearing the marks of the cross, and as he unfolds to them more and more of the plan of redemption, what wonder that heaven echoes with their song: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and the Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever!"

They praise God; and oh! what ascriptions they render him. They do not sit down, as mere passive recipients of joy—spiritual voluptuaries—but they "serve Him, day and night, in his temple." They are employed in studying his works of nature, of providence, and of grace; they fly abroad on errands of mercy, striking their harps and filling the air with rapturous

songs. Wonderful, wonderful! They "*serve* Him" continually, and yet "they *rest* from their labors!" But this is all one, for God in these different ways would reveal to every aptitude, and every grade of human understanding, the various and blissful employments of the redeemed in heaven.

And all that constitutes the happiness of the future world is eternal. It is an "enduring substance," "a continuing city," "eternal life." This is the crowning consideration. This makes heaven perfect, and makes it meet every desire, and hope, and aspiration of my heart. Thanks be to God that the inheritance of the saints is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. ETERNAL, is inscribed on their bodies, their minds, their residence, their employments, their society, and on everything which contributes to their happiness. In God's presence there is fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Such, or something like to these, we suppose, would be the musings of a thoughtful Christian on the future life. And is it not a LIFE, indeed, that follows his death! Who will not be thankful that God has prepared such a rest for his

people; that while we are surrounded by mementoes of death, and bear about its seeds in our own bodies, God has provided for us eternal life! Oh, what a reversion to creatures so unworthy!

Let us occupy our thoughts more habitually with the concerns of another world. To do so will not mar our happiness, nor, as some seem to fear, hasten the approach of death. It will serve to bring heaven nearer to our conceptions, and make it appear to be, what it truly is, a blessed reality. Living thus, close upon its borders, we shall be less engrossed with the vanities of this world, shall imbibe more of the spirit of heaven, and be indulged with many a glimpse of its glories, and many a foretaste of its joys.

We mourn, it may be, the loss of Christian friends. But one glance into heaven shows them to us there, not dead, but living, and inexpressibly happy. There they are, safely across the dreaded river, welcomed by sainted friends, dwelling in the mansions which Christ had prepared, and in the very presence of God and the Lamb.

We sometimes think of our own death with apprehension and dread. But on looking across

the dark valley to the glories beyond, we almost forget the grave, or think of it only to smile at its terrors. We see that God never designed to keep his children here forever ; that he has something far better in store for them on high, that while there is much upon the earth that is desirable and goodly to behold, so long as he appoints our stay here, yet, our real good, our highest glory and happiness is in the life to come. There, there is the great consummation ! There sin is no more, death is no more. They are swallowed up of eternal life. "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Let us be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

THE HEAVENLY RECOGNITION.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

YOUR letter lately received, in which you speak of the recognition of pious friends in the future world, has furnished me an interesting subject of reflection. You say that you *hope* and *feel* that you shall meet your sainted dead in heaven, though you are not able to give a formal and satisfactory reason for your faith. I shall hardly be able to meet your expectations in this matter, but as you desire it, I will give you my views upon the subject.

It is interesting to notice how universally this doctrine has been believed. As a classical scholar you will at once recall the many interviews which Homer describes between the shades of kindred and friends in the world of spirits. Also the words of Socrates: "Who would not part with a great deal to purchase a meeting with Orpheus, Hesiod and Homer? What inconceivable happiness will it be to converse in another

world with Sisyphus, Ulysses and Palemedes, especially, as those who inhabit that world shall die no more." You will remember the pathetic declaration of Cicero on the death of his son: "If I seemed to bear his death with fortitude, it was by no means that I did not most sensibly feel the loss I had sustained; it was because I supported myself with the consoling reflection that we could not long be separated."

But to come down to modern times;—you see this sentiment inscribed on the monuments of every grave-yard; the man of God expresses it over the remains of the dead; it gives pathos to the funeral hymn, and it comforts the darkest hour of the bereaved. Now, may not this belief, so common even among pagans, be regarded as the earnest expectation of the creature,—as indicating a want of the soul which God might be expected most surely to meet in his word? And wherever cherished, may we not view it, if not as the bread which God gives his children, at least as the crumbs which fall from the Master's table?

Another general consideration of some importance is this: Our mental faculties will be essentially the same in the next world as in this.

If it were not so,—especially, if memory were destroyed, it would not only render our minds more imperfect than they now are, but it would take away all responsibility, for God as a just Being could not make retribution for a life that had been forgotten. And if memory is preserved, shall we not recollect and therefore recognize those we knew on earth? Is it not probable that the righteous will remember, among other things, that portion of the earth in which God had cast their lot, their Christian parents and faithful ministers, their conversion, their trials and joys, their labors in the cause of Christ, and their successes, their sickness and their death? And as friends here on earth delight to review together scenes in which they have had a mutual experience, so, we may suppose, friends in heaven will find their happiness increased by contemplating with each other all the way in which the Lord had led them.

Again, we are told, that at the judgment day, the whole race will be assembled together, and the history of every soul be revealed, in order that the justice of God's ways may be clearly seen and fully acknowledged by the entire universe. Of course, we could not hear such a

revelation of the character and life of those we had previously known, and yet not recognize them. And if we know them at the judgment (whether by a direct revelation, or by the simple exercise of memory,) is it supposable that God will immediately obliterate that knowledge? It surely would not make heaven more glorious to have the past blotted out, and to have all who had hitherto been friends, meet as strangers.

Turning, however, from these conclusions of reason, let us consider the argument as drawn more directly from Scripture. It is worthy of notice that the Bible frequently represents heaven as a social state. And if Christians who had before been strangers will then know each other, much more will they who had formerly been acquainted. There is no apparent propriety in supposing their previous knowledge destroyed, only to be imparted again by a special act of divine power.

Is there not also some intimation of this doctrine in those passages of Scripture where Abraham and other Old Testament saints are spoken of as being "gathered to their fathers," "gathered to their people," &c.? These expressions are not used in reference to the gathering of

their *bodies* in one place for sepulture, since many of them were buried wide asunder. (See Gen. 24: 9., 47: 29., 49: 33., Deut. 32: 50.)

Notice, also, the exclamations of Jacob at the supposed death of Joseph, and of David on the decease of his child. In both cases it is manifest that they expected to meet and recognize their children in the future world.

Let us now turn to the New Testament. A short time before our Saviour's crucifixion, he told his disciples, that on ascending to heaven, he would prepare a place for them, and at their death would receive them to himself, that they might again be where he was. And will he not as truly gather all his disciples together at the last into his immediate presence, and make them happy in their mutual fellowship?

In the parable of the unjust steward, we are taught that those who have used their property in befriending the poor and suffering on earth, will be welcomed by them into heaven.

In the parable of the rich man, we have a glimpse of the future world, and we there see that Lazarus was recognized by Dives. And as one has remarked: "If Dives, *from the depths of despair*, recognized Lazarus, most certainly

will Christian friends recognize each other *in heaven*. If they are one in spirit here, as Christ himself prayed they might be, most truly will they be there. A common bond of love will unite them, binding them to each other and to God."

In writing to the Thessalonians (1 Epis. 4: 13) the apostle comforts those who had been afflicted, by saying, Though your friends die, you should not mourn as though you were not again to see them, for you and they will rise from the dead, and thenceforth remain forever united with each other and with the Lord. Let me refer you to one more class of passages (2 Cor. 1: 14., 4: 14., 1 Thess. 2: 19., Col. 1: 28.) Writing to the various churches gathered by his labors, the apostle says: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? Knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you?" Do not these and similar passages show that Paul confidently expected to meet and to know those who had been converted through his instrumentality? It is obvious, from his frequent reference to it, that he thought much

and with delight of that future meeting, and that the anticipation comforted him in the midst of his labors.

But without dwelling longer on this view of the subject, I will notice an objection which embarrasses you, viz : the knowledge that some of their friends are lost, will mar the happiness of those who are saved. On the same ground, then, must you not object that God should suffer his saints to hear the final sentence of the wicked, lest it should make them unhappy ? But they will hear it. The angels are happy, though they know that some of their former number are lost. Christ is perfectly happy, though he knows that some for whose salvation he shed his blood are lost. Our present views of God's character and plans are very imperfect,—owing partly to the weakness of our understandings, but still more to the corruption of our hearts. In heaven, God's wisdom and justice and benevolence will shine forth so gloriously, that our thoughts will be engrossed with the contemplation. Our wills, also, will have become perfectly accordant with his. The beauty and excellence of holiness, and the vileness of sin, will appear so amazing that we shall see clearly the ground of the sinner's con-

demnation ; the enemy of God and of holiness, be he who he may, will have no place in our sympathy ; and at the sentence which consigns him to woe, as truly as at the acquittal and welcome of the righteous, we shall say with all the spirits about the throne : “ Just and true are thy ways, oh, thou King of saints ! ”

You make another suggestion, my friend, which is of the greatest importance, viz : that while we hope for a re-union of Christian friends in heaven, a proper state of religious feeling will always lead us to regard this as only a subordinate part of heavenly happiness. The supreme felicity of the future world will be the vision of God and the Lamb. And if, at any time, our natural affections tempt us to forget or undervalue this, let us, with Whitefield, bid them “ stand back, and keep us not from the sight of our Saviour.” Fervent as may be our desires and hopes to meet departed friends, let the absorbing thought be that of seeing Him who loved us and gave himself for us.

The subject of this letter is not without its practical bearings and uses. Its tendency is to elevate, strengthen and purify our natural affections. It shows us that friendship, cemented by

piety, will be eternal. All other ties, however strong, will be broken when the silver cord is loosed. But the Christian may love his pious friends as ardently as his soul has power to do, and yet know assuredly that death will not chill his attachments, nor eternity outlast them. The separations of the grave will be short; shorter, probably, than many which occur during the vicissitudes of this life. How true and beautiful the words of Baxter: "I must confess, as the experience of my own soul, that the expectation of loving my friends in heaven, principally kindles my love to them on earth. If I thought that I should never know them, and consequently never love them after this life is ended, I should in reason number them with temporal things, and love them as such. But I now delight to converse with my pious friends, in a firm persuasion that I shall converse with them forever; and I take comfort in those of them that are dead or absent, as believing that I shall shortly meet them in heaven, and love them with a heavenly love that shall there be perfected."

At the approach of death we naturally shrink back and cling to the friends we leave behind. But if God's chosen time for us to die has come,

it will not be impossible to convince ourselves that this is the best time, and that to die will be gain. Look up, oh ! trembling soul, to heaven. There is thy Saviour, He whom thy soul loveth ; there are shining ranks of angels, and the good of all times ; thy friends and kindred are there, waiting to greet thee with welcomes and congratulations. And though you leave many behind with whom and for whose sake it might seem desirable to live, you will go to many others in whose fellowship your happiness will be perfect and eternal. And those from whom you are now separated will soon follow you and remain with you forever.

In bereavement we have, among other consolations, that of David, that though we cannot bring back the dead to us, we shall go to them. Their corruptible bodies and ours shall be raised incorruptible, and be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body ; we shall be again united, and our fellowship and joy will be unbroken and perfect.

A firm belief of this truth tends also to bring the mind under the influence of spiritual and heavenly realities. God reaches the heart of many a sinner through the channel of his natu-

ral affections,—taking to heaven those about whom his heart-strings had twined, that he might by a sweet attraction draw him thither also. To the Christian in contemplation of heaven, Christ is ever the chief among ten thousand, yet the thought of pious friends there serves to bring that holy world near, and gives it a reality and distinctness which make it powerfully influential on his feelings and his life.

And not the least of the happy influences of this doctrine is the incentive it affords the Christian to labor for the salvation of his kindred and friends. All souls are of priceless value, but we are bound to feel special interest in those to whom God has united us in the most intimate relations. These friendships now contribute to our well-being and happiness;—Christian affection cries: Oh! let us endeavor to make them eternal. Forbid it that any whom we now honor and love for their external virtues and accomplishments, or those whom we clasp as our own blood, should, through our fault, be ranked among the enemies of God, and so be missing from our side at the last great day! Let us try the efficacy of prayer, and of a consistent life. Our friends united to Christ, as well as to us,

will be doubly dear; we can share each other's joys and sorrows, help each other's labors, and at death, our friendship having "the rivet of eternity," will remain unbroken, and contribute an humble share to the joys of heaven.

A REMINISCENCE.

C—— was the youngest son of Christian parents. He was consecrated to God in his childhood, and was trained up amid religious influences in the family, the Sabbath school and the church of Christ. At several different periods in his youth, he manifested much sensibility on the subject of personal religion, but being naturally gay, and surrounded by worldly associates, his seriousness soon disappeared. As he approached mature years, his parents and pious friends felt great solicitude for his spiritual welfare, and made mention of him always in their prayers. And at times, their desires and exertions did not seem in vain; for, when reminded of his religious obligations, he always listened with respect, and, not seldom, with tears. But his heart as yet clung to the world, and no human power could detach it and fix it upon heaven.

From his youth he had manifested superior musical talent, which became more and more

marked with his advancing years. His friends, observing the bent of his inclination and tastes, approved his desire to devote himself chiefly to music as a profession. He soon became interested in studying the highest order of musical compositions, and learned to perform on various instruments, almost without the aid of teachers. As his acquaintance with the works of European composers was extended, he became desirous to visit the continent, and to enjoy the superior advantages there afforded for the study and cultivation of his favorite art. His imagination, too, was fired with what he had read of the wonders of the Old World; he longed to see them for himself; and so, at the age of twenty years, he crossed the Atlantic. Landing at Southampton, he proceeded by way of Paris, Brussels, and Cologne, to Hamburg, in Germany. In this ancient city he remained for the greater part of a year, under the tuition of accomplished teachers. Here, and in other cities of central Europe, which he occasionally visited, he had constant opportunities for attending musical exhibitions of a high order, and thus his love for the art and his abilities as a performer were highly cultivated.

When the contemplated period of his absence from home had nearly expired, he started for Paris, with the design of visiting the chief cities of England, and then sailing for his native land. His letters to friends in America, written about this time, breathe strong attachment to his country and kindred, and express it as among his most ardent wishes to enjoy once more a quiet and permanent home among his native hills. But these hopes were not to be realized. During the journey from Hamburg to Paris, he contracted a severe cold which settled upon his lungs, producing inflammation, which was soon followed by a profuse and alarming hemorrhage. An American friend residing in Paris, hastened to his bedside, and rendered him all the assistance in his power. He secured the best medical advice, and obtained a kind and skillful nurse to attend upon his hourly wants.

And here I am reminded of a circumstance worthy of particular remark. His nurse was a pious English lady, who had formerly moved in the higher walks of life, but was now compelled to obtain her livelihood chiefly by taking care of the sick. Shortly after being called to the bedside of the young American of whom I have

spoken, her experienced eye saw that in all probability he would not recover. She learned, also, that he was not a Christian, and, therefore, was not prepared to die. As she watched by his pillow, day by day, she often said to herself, Is there not something that I can do for the good of his soul, as well as for the health of his body? I cannot bear to see him die, without speaking to him of Christ and of heaven. God may bless my words, and hear my prayers. Her plan was soon formed; and, choosing a favorable opportunity, she asked the privilege of reading to him the lesson for the day, as set forth in the liturgy of the English church. At first, he was reluctant to grant her request, but soon, in deference to her wishes, consented. After she had continued this exercise for a few days, he thanked her for undertaking it, and earnestly desired its continuance.

She then proposed to add a short prayer to the reading of Scripture, to which he also consented, and afterward wished it to be frequently repeated. At the close of these exercises, he often remarked that "the Scriptures sounded new" to him; he wondered that he had hitherto read the Bible so little, or with so great thoughtless-

ness. During her prayers, his mind was deeply interested in the subject of her petitions, and he frequently responded with an audible voice to her entreaties for his forgiveness and salvation. The Rev. Frederic Monod, of Paris, also visited him a few times during his sickness, and found reason to regard him as a genuine subject of divine grace.

Meanwhile, his disease advanced with steady strides, and all, except himself, saw that his days on earth would soon be ended. *His* heart alone was full of hope; and he delighted to think and to speak of the pleasure he should have, ere long, of reaching home, comforting the declining years of a widowed mother, setting a Christian example, and living a useful life. But death did not heed his vain dreams of recovery and of future usefulness. His disease had nearly done its work, and his physician and attendants, impelled by a sense of duty, told him kindly, but with plainness, that he could not long survive, and that whatever he had to do in this world, must be done without delay. At this announcement his mind was agitated with conflicting emotions. "I had at times suspected as much," he said, "but still hoped it would not prove to be so. Oh! must

I die here, little cared for, in this distant land, amid these strange faces, with the ocean rolling between me and my home and kindred. Oh, my mother! my poor mother! — it will kill her to hear of my death.” This was an outburst of nature, the overflow of a warm, impulsive heart. But after this first expression of natural feeling, a new order of sentiments and emotions gained ascendancy, and higher words fell from his lips. God’s grace enabled him to say: “Much as I love life, and home, and friends, I love God more. It is better, oh! far better, to depart and be with Christ, than to live.” On the day of his death, he charged a friend to cause his remains to be conveyed to America, and left tokens and messages of love to be sent to his distant friends. This being done, he apparently withdrew his thoughts from earthly concerns, and waited calmly for the hour of death. To his faithful nurse, he said: “One more of those good prayers, before I die;” and during worship his soul seemed rapt away in joyful communion with Christ. At length, he grew weaker, and in his wanderings spoke of his mother, and then of his Saviour, and then of his brothers, and then of heaven and its glory,—nature and

grace both striving for a place in his heart, and for utterance from his lips. And with such words, he died. "He died like an angel," said one who beheld him. "May my last end be like his," said another, in whose arms he lay as he ceased to breathe.

The lessons and truths suggested by these facts are so obvious, that it is hardly necessary to indicate them. I will simply refer to a few.

1. The importance of parental fidelity. It was not a vain thing that this young man had been dedicated to God in his childhood, that he was taught to fear his Creator, to keep His commandments, to repent of his sins, and to believe in Christ. Family worship was not without its hallowed influence upon his heart. Nor was it in vain that his parents prayed for him in secret. God was faithful who had promised, though he chose his own time and manner in which to bestow his blessing.

2. The inscrutability of God's ways. Why was not the subject of this sketch made a child of God in early youth? Why was he permitted to go abroad into a foreign land, without the shield of virtue in temptation, or where sickness and sudden death might fall upon him unpre-

pared, and without the probability of his finding a religious instructor to direct him in the way of life? Why was he suffered to resist the various influences brought to bear upon his childhood and youth, to pass through several seasons of special religious interest unbenefited, and then taken to Europe, to a chamber in gay, voluptuous, infidel Paris, and there, by the blessing of God upon the efforts of an humble nurse, made to experience (as we humbly trust) the transforming power of the Holy Ghost? How different this from what man might have expected and desired! But Infinite Wisdom takes no counsel of man. With our hands upon our lips, let us adore in silence, remembering that God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as ours.

3. Encouragement to Christian faithfulness in our intercourse with the sick. Had that nurse cherished no higher sense of responsibility, and no deeper solicitude for the salvation of souls than many Christians entertain, she would have rested satisfied with simply doing what she had been hired to do,—to take care of his bodily wants. Being a female, and a stranger, and the sick man a high-spirited youth, she would have

shrunk from all effort for his spiritual good. But she valued the soul too highly, and had too strong faith in the promises of God, to fold her arms in indolent despair. She began her efforts prudently, and prosecuted them patiently and faithfully, and God smiled upon her exertions. Let us learn to care more for the souls of men, than for their bodies, or even for their good-will. Wisely-directed efforts for the spiritual good of the sick will not hinder their recovery; or, if it should, the possible evil had better be risked, than to allow an immortal soul to exchange worlds, unprepared for the solemnities of eternity. Let us be wisely faithful, and God will bless our fidelity.

PART II.



SELECTIONS.

RELIGION A SOLACE IN AFFLICTION.

IF the Scripture doctrine of immortality is entitled to weight in the regulation of *life*, its influence is not less sovereign in dispelling the terrors of *death*, and consoling us under the loss of our dearest friends and relatives. "I would not have you be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not as others who have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God. Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; so shall we be forever with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words." And who can fail being penetrated with the divine consolation they afford? If ever

Christianity appears in its power, it is when it erects its trophies on the tomb ; when it takes up its votaries where the world leaves them, and fills the breast with immortal hopes in dying moments.

Nor are the words I have quoted adapted to support the mind of a Christian in the view of his own dissolution, only ; they administer the firmest support amidst the breaches which death is continually making in the church of Christ. A degree of sorrow on such occasions, nature compels us to feel, and religion does not condemn. At the decease of Lazarus, while his sisters were lamenting his loss, "Jesus wept." But the sorrow which a Christian feels in such situations, is mingled with hope. By the light of faith he traces his deceased friends into an eternal world. Instead of considering them as lost or extinct, he beholds them under the eye of Divine Providence. The period of their trial is closed ; they have entered into rest, where, sheltered from the storms of life and the dangers of temptation, their happiness is forever fixed and unalterable. Their separation is neither final nor complete. The pious living and the pious dead are still one family, under one head ;

and when he "who is their life shall appear, they shall appear together with him in glory."

ROBERT HALL.

EVERY man shows fair in prosperity ; but the main trial of the Christian is in suffering : any man may steer in a good gale and clear sea ; but the mariner's skill will be seen in a tempest.

Herein the Christian goes beyond the Pagan's, not practice only, but admiration. "We rejoice in tribulation," saith the chosen vessel. Lo, here a point transcending all the affectation of heathenism. Perhaps some resolute spirit, whether out of a natural fortitude, or out of an ambition of fame, or earthly glory, may set a face upon a patient enduring of loss or pain ; but never any of those heroic Gentiles durst pretend to a joy in suffering. Hither can Christian courage reach ; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed.

Is he bereaved of his goods and worldly estate ? he comforts himself in the conscience of a

better treasure, that can never be lost. Is he afflicted with sickness? his comfort is that the inward man is so much more renewed daily, as the outward man perisheth. Is he slandered and unjustly disgraced? his comfort is that there is a blessing which will more than make him amends. Is he banished? he knows he is on his way homeward. Is he imprisoned? his spirit cannot be locked in; God and his angels cannot be locked out. Is he dying? to him "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Is he dead? he "rests from his labors," and is crowned with glory. Shortly, he is perfect gold, that comes more pure out of the fire than it went in; neither had he ever been so great a saint in heaven, if he had not passed through the flames of his trial here upon earth.

BISHOP HALL.

CONSOLATION SOUGHT AND FOUND.

WHEN the clouds of desolation
Gather o'er my naked head,
And my spirit's agitation
Knows not where to turn or tread ;
When life's gathering storms compel me
To submit to wants and woes,
Who shall teach me, who shall tell me
Where my heart may find repose ?

To the stars I fain would reach me,
There the God of light must dwell ;
Sacred teachers ! will ye teach me ?
Blest instructors ! will ye tell ?
How my voice may reach that portal
Where the seraphs crowd in throngs ;
How the lisping of a mortal
May be heard 'midst angel songs !

God and Father ! Thou didst give me
Sorrow for my portion here ;
But thy mercy will not leave me
Helpless, struggling with despair ;

For to Thee, when sad and lonely,
Unto Thee, alone, I turn;
And to Thee, my Father, only
Look for comfort when I mourn.

Nor in vain — for light is breaking
'Midst the sorrows, 'midst the storms;
And methinks I see awaking
Heavenly hopes and angel forms;
And my spirit waxes stronger,
And my trembling heart is still;
And my bosom doubts no longer
Thine inexplicable will.

J. BOWRING.

DIVINE CONSOLATIONS.

THERE is a remedy for troubled and perplexing thoughts,—one remedy, and only one. This is not in mere force of will. Powerful as is the human will, it is no match for the excited sensibility. The will can resist truth, motive, argument, appeal,—it can even resist the Spirit of God, and all the forces that Omnipotence arrays against it from without, but it cannot withstand the tumult of the mind itself when thought runs wild through the excitement of emotion. The helmsman is driven from his post by the surging billows, and as often as he attempts to regain it he is dashed prostrate and impotent upon the deck, or swept overboard into the sea. The will cannot govern in such a storm. And herein is an evidence of God's moral government over men, in that He can thus turn upon the soul a flood of memories and of fears from which it cannot deliver itself except by his good pleasure.

The diversions of the world will not allay such

an excitement of the mind. When the mind is agitated with excessive grief or fear, it loses all relish for worldly pleasures. These are a mockery to it. Every passion of the soul is absorbed in the present or impending calamity. The most intoxicating pleasures of the world are but as vinegar and gall to one in the agonies of crucifixion. Even though for a while one should be diverted from his harrassing cares or griefs by some transitory pleasure, yet the cause of his painful excitement remains, and his trouble returns with a violence the greater for its brief respite.

Neither can Time minister effectively to a mind thus disturbed. Time may have a soothing influence upon grief, it may lessen burdens, quiet fears, and alleviate sorrows; but time alone cannot restore the disturbed balance of the mind, or secure it against fresh outbreaks of anguish, or fresh inroads of fear.

There is but one remedy for distracting thoughts, and this the Psalmist found in divine consolations. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, *thy comforts* delight my soul."

The character of God gives consolation to the troubled mind, if that mind has ever learned to

look to God and to confide in him. Is the mind disturbed with thoughts of personal guilt? Does conviction stir its depths like a troubled sea? The mercy of God, rich, boundless, free, a mercy that like a greater sea, vast, calm and fathomless, swallows up all other seas in its stupendous tide — rolls in upon the soul a fullness of peace that “passeth all understanding.”

Is the mind agitated with doubts and apprehensions for the future? The goodness and the truth of God, unsearchable and unchangeable, bring to it an assurance of comfort and support. Is the mind perplexed with the providential dealings of God — with the prosperity of the wicked and the oppression of the just? The infinite justice of God, beaming through the clouds and darkness that surround his throne, brings consolation and hope in the darkest hour. And thus, through all the fluctuating emotions of the soul, and in all its varying phases, there is in the character of God when fairly developed to its view, some specific adaptation to its support and consolation.

The government of God is a source of consolation to the troubled spirit. Indeed there is no true consolation that does not involve a recogni-

tion of the divine government. The waves of care and sorrow will dash us every whither until we plant our feet upon the everlasting granite of the sovereignty of God. Here the Psalmist found relief from all his perplexities respecting wicked men. "Thy righteousness, O God, is very high. My tongue shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long."

It is not enough that one should believe in the existence of God, or acknowledge in a general way his attributes,—he must believe in the government of God as a reality, a present fact, and upon that he can lean with absolute assurance. The rugged, cloud-capped mountain that strikes him with awe, gives him a refuge and defense.

The promises of God shed consolation over the troubled spirit. These promises are at once specific and comprehensive. "The Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him. Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. We know that all things work [are working] together for good to them that love God."—Well may such comforts delight the soul; rich, abundant, adapted

to its every want. Such strong consolation have they who flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them.

But higher than all these consolations, and involving all these, is that which springs from the presence of God realized unto the soul. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." And is this indeed so? Is God my Saviour with me as I go through the fire and the flood? What matter the perils of the sea, the violence of the winds, the madness of the waves, if Jesus is with me in the boat? Though he seem to be sleeping, I am safe. He will arouse in time to save me. He will rebuke the tempest, and on the instant there shall be a great calm. Ah, let it not be that he shall rebuke me also for little faith. Christ engages to be with me; and shall I doubt that he is with me? Christ engages to support me, and shall I doubt whether he will support me? Christ engages to deliver me; and shall I doubt that he will deliver me? He bids

me cast all my care on Him, for he careth for me.

“And shall I still the load retain
Which thou hast offered to sustain?
No, at thy bidding, I will flee,
And cast my burdens all on thee.”

My soul, there is coming to thee an hour of hurried thought, of quickened memory, of eager expectation; the hour that shall part the veil and make the Present and the Future one, and pour upon the Past the light of eternity. Oh, then, in the multitude of thy thoughts, amid all thy self-upbraidings, thy remembered sins, thy conscious weaknesses, thy rising doubts and fears, may the consolations of thy Saviour's word, and presence give thee joy.

JOS. P. THOMPSON.

CHRISTIAN RESIGNATION.

A CHRISTIAN should never murmur and repine at the accidents of life. We often desire the accomplishment of a thing good in itself; we endeavor to obtain it; and when baffled in our attempts, are prone to repine. Let us remember that all such repining is nothing less than murmuring against God. God chooses, in the wisdom of his councils, either not to gratify our wishes, or defer their accomplishment, or take from us what we deem the richest of our possessions: a Christian, therefore, should not repine at the overruling providence of God. All such uneasiness, all such impatience, all such want of acquiescence in the Divine will, is sinful. O, how do we imbitter the cup of life, in thus stirring up its dregs by our agitated feelings! We seem to want our own will, although we daily repeat and say unto the Lord, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven."

ANONYMOUS.

It is a piece of that corruption which runneth through human nature, that we naturally prize truth more than goodness, knowledge more than holiness. We think it a gallant thing to be fluttering up to heaven, with our wings of knowledge and speculation : whereas, the highest mystery of a divine life here, and of perfect happiness hereafter, consisteth in nothing but *mere obedience to the Divine Will*. Happiness is nothing but that inward, sweet delight, that will arise from the harmonious agreement between our wills and God's will.

CUDWORTH.

WE are forbidden to murmur, but we are not forbidden to *regret* ; and whom we loved tenderly while living, we may still pursue with an affectionate remembrance, without having any occasion to charge ourselves with rebellion against the sovereignty that appointed a separation.

COWPER.

WHEN I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he, returning, chide;
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask: but Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best: his state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest
They also serve who only stand and wait."

MILTON, *on his Blindness.*

REST IN GOD.

CHRISTIAN rest may be maintained amidst trials and suffering. Here it distinguishes itself from anything which the world calls by its name. Worldly persons have their enjoyments; but they are dependent on worldly things, and when these are broken or removed, the tranquillity ceases. It is the glory of true religion, that it can be firm and serene amidst storms of change. In days of prosperity, when all things smile, it is easy to maintain quiet of soul: but when skies grow dark, when friends are few, when health fails, when losses and bereavements and old age come on, and misfortunes thicken every hour,—to be tranquil then—to feel that all is safe—that the real portion has not been touched—that God is still the same, and that he is ours; this is what cannot be comprehended by the man of the world, or by the formal professor. And yet

it is true, and is exemplified in a thousand cases of distress and consolation. Were it not so, such songs as the forty-sixth psalm had long been blotted out of the psalter, as containing idle falsehood: whereas, generation after generation in the Church for nearly three thousand years has been singing with experience and triumph: "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea: though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." If you would see the true victory over the world, visit the experienced Christian amidst his trials. At the first he may indeed be shaken for a little season, in order that he may the better feel the solid foundation under his feet: but at length he finds his footing on the Rock of Ages, and can cry; "Lo! this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

. . . . Many persons are sufficiently persuaded of the world's unsatisfactoriness, but have taken no steps towards the supply of their

great want. You, let me say, are the very persons to whom religion ought to be welcome. It is the very repose you need. In vain do you weary yourselves, to procure rest by any other means. It is not in the creature. You were made to repose in God. You deny your souls their chief blessing, while you remain alienated from him. And how strange is the illusion which prompts your delay! Your procrastination is a putting off of the happiness which you might be beginning to enjoy, and which would be always the greater during your whole existence, for your having begun now. Are there not moments when you are almost disgusted with life? when your pleasures have no longer any zest? when compunction more than neutralizes your joys? when, in a word, you feel your need of God? Though there is nothing necessarily holy in these sentiments, they bring you nearer the borders of a religious life; they should be seized on, as so many promptings to fulfil your grand obligation. Do you ask me what I would have you to do? The answer is easy, and it is momentous. Return to your rest. Return, return! O wanderer, you are in the wrong path.

Every step takes you further away. Never can you supply these cravings, or quell these perturbations, but by coming to Him, who is the Infinite Portion and the Everlasting Rest.

J. W. ALEXANDER.

HEAVEN UPON EARTH.

. . . SINCE we seek how to live well and happily, there yet remain those positive rules whereby our tranquillity may be both had, continued, and confirmed. Wherein I fear not lest I should seem over-divine, in casting the anchor of quietness so deep as heaven, the only seat of constancy, whiles it can find no hold at all upon earth. All earthly things are full of variable-ness; and, therefore, having no stay in themselves, can give none to us. He that will have and hold right, tranquillity, must find in himself a sweet fruition of God, and a feeling apprehension of his presence; that whiles he finds manifold occasions of vexation in these earthly things, he, overlooking them all, and having recourse to his Comforter, may find in him such matter of contentment, that he may pass over all these petty grievances with contempt; which, whosoever wants, may be secure, cannot be quiet.

. . . What state is there, wherein this

heavenly stay shall not afford me not only peace, but joy. Am I in prison, or in the hell of prisons, in some dark, low, and desolate dungeon? Lo, there Algerius, that sweet martyr, finds more light than above, and pities the darkness of our liberty! We have but a sun to enlighten our world, which every cloud dimmeth, and hideth from our eyes; but the "Father of Lights,"—in respect of whom all the bright stars of heaven are but as the snuff of a dim candle—shines into his pit, and the presence of his glorious angels makes that an heaven to him, which the world purposed as an hell of discomfort. What walls can keep out that Infinite Spirit that fills all things? What darkness can be where the God of this sun dwelleth? What sorrow, where he comforteth? Am I wandering in banishment?—can I go whither God is not? What sea can divide betwixt him and me? Then would I fear exile, if I could be driven away as well from God as my country. Now he is as much in all earths, his title is alike to all places, and mine in him: his sun shines to me, his sea or earth bears me up, his presence cheereth me whithersoever I go. He cannot be said to flit, that never changeth his host. He alone is a

thousand companions; he alone is a world of friends. That man never knew what it was to be familiar with God, that complains of the want of home, of friends, of companions, while God is with him. Am I contemned of the world? It is enough for me that I am honored of God — of both, I cannot. The world would love me more, if I were less friends with God. It cannot hate me so much as God hates it. What care I to be hated of them whom God hateth? He is unworthy of God's favor, that cannot think it happiness enough without the world's. How easy is it for such a man, while the world disgraces him, at once to scorn and pity it that it cannot think nothing more contemptible than itself. I am impoverished with losses. That was never thoroughly good, that may be lost. My riches will not leese me — yea, though I forego all, to my skin, yet have I not lost any part of my wealth. For if he be rich that hath something, how rich is he that hath the Maker and Owner of all things? I am weak and diseased in body. He cannot miscarry, that hath his Maker for his physician. Yet my soul, the better part, is sound; for that cannot be weak whose strength God is. How many are sick in

that, and complain not! I can be content to be let blood in the arm or foot, for the curing of the head or heart. The health of the principal part is more joy to me than it is trouble to be distempered in the inferior. Let me know that God favors me: then I have liberty in prison, home in banishment, honor in contempt, in losses wealth, health in infirmity, life in death, and in all these — happiness.

O the easy and happy recourse that the poor soul hath to the high throne of heaven! We stay not for the holding out of a golden sceptre to warn our admission; before which our presence should be presumption and death. No hour is unseasonable, no person too base, no words too homely, no fact too hard, no importunity too great. We speak familiarly; we are heard, answered, comforted. Another while, God interchangeably speaks unto us, by the secret voice of his Spirit, or by the audible sound of his word; we hear, adore, answer him; by both which, the mind so communicates itself to God, and hath God so plentifully communicated unto it, that hereby it grows to such an habit of heavenliness, as that now it wants nothing, but dissolution, of full glory. BISHOP HALL.

DELIGHT IN GOD ONLY.

I LOVE, (and have some cause to love,) the earth;
She is my Maker's creature, therefore good;
She is my mother, for she gave me birth;
She is my tender nurse, she gave me food;
But what's a creature, Lord, compared with thee?

I love the air; her daily sweets refresh
My drooping soul, and to new sweets invite me;
Her shrill-mouthed quire sustain me with their flesh,
And with their polyphonian notes delight me;
But what's the air, or all the sweets that she
Can bless my soul withal, compared to thee?

I love the sea: she is my fellow-creature,
My careful purveyor; she provides me store
She walls me round; she makes my diet greater;
She wafts my treasure from a foreign shore;
But, Lord of oceans, when compared with thee,
What is the ocean, or her wealth, to me?

To heaven's high city, I direct my journey,
Whose spangled suburbs entertain mine eye;
Mine eye, by contemplation's great attorney,
Transcends the crystal pavement of the sky;
But what is heaven, great God, compared to thee?
Without thy presence, heaven's no heaven to me.

Without thy presence, earth gives no reflection ;
Without thy presence, sea affords no treasure ;
Without thy presence, air is rank infection ;
Without thy presence, heaven itself's no pleasure ;
If not possessed, if not enjoyed in THEE,
What's earth, or sea, or air, or heaven, to me?

FRANCES QUARLES.

H*

12

SICKNESS.

THERE is always much sickness in this world. No man can entirely escape it but by a sudden death, which calls him in a moment into eternity. So far as the truly pious are concerned, it is probable that the terrors of sickness are often greater than the actual pains endured. Some sicknesses waste the frame without beclouding the mind. Others beget stupor, which destroys sensibility to pain. To him who has made up his mind to be sick, and not to murmur, sickness may, without a miracle, be a means of great enjoyment. It is delightful to a good man to find his principles capable of enduring such a trial as sickness subjects them to. The severer the sickness, often the greater the joy. Were I to be sent into a city in the land to find the happiest person there, I should not go to places of business, mirth or fashion, in quest of my object. I would be much more apt to succeed in some humble abode among the sick of Christ's flock.

I know a man, who says he has seen four very happy days : one was the day of his marriage, one the day of his conversion, and the other two were spent in sickness, away from home with a burning fever on him. The world has seldom seen a more exemplary servant of Christ, than the celebrated Rivet. As a student, a writer, a preacher, he was full of energy. Yet he said he "had learned more divinity in ten days' sickness, than in fifty years' study." Think you those ten days were remembered with sadness? Nay, even as they passed away, had they not great pleasures in their train? The pious Halyburton, in a state of great weakness and pain, said : "Verily, there is a reality in religion. The little acquaintance I have had with God within these two days, has been better than ten thousand times the pains I have all my life been at about religion. These fourteen or fifteen years I have been studying the promises; but I have seen more of the book of God this night than all that time. If I had my students about me now, I would give them a lesson of divinity." He said much more to the same effect.

Call to mind, also, the wonders of mercy shown to Payson. Was Jeremiah Evarts a forlorn, an

unhappy man, when he cried out in extreme faintness and distress of body, "O wonderful, wonderful glory!" Had he ever been happier? Was Dr. J. H. Rice an unhappy man, when he said, "Mercy is triumphant!"

But particular cases need not be multiplied. Every pastor sees them: every evangelical church furnishes them. If *such* be the manner of God's dealing with us in sickness, we need not dread it. Let it come. It has sweet mercies in its sharpest pangs.

But if we shall not have such supports and joys, our sickness may yet be very bearable. God may indeed appoint wearisome nights and days of vanity to us, scaring us in visions of the night, or holding our eyes waking. Our bed may not comfort us, nor our couch ease our complaints. And God may hide his face from some. At least, their consolations may be small. Yet if they learn lessons of humility and self-abasement there, the issue may be as happy as if their eye had overflowed with the richest joys. Any thing is good for a man that humbles him.

Or, perhaps, one needed some new lessons of the vanity of the world, or of the frailty of his body, and Jehovah taught them to him effectually.

ally. So the mighty man no longer glories in his might, nor the rich man in his riches, nor the favorite of the people in their idle breath; but he is brought to glory in the Lord alone. Before he leaves his couch, he cries: "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." Is not anything good for a man, that makes him see that all is vanity of vanities below the skies? Do not even the aged servants of God often need such a lesson before they are willing to let go of earth?

Well does Paul call the effects of sanctified affliction "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." This applies as much to sickness as to any other affliction. How softly does one, chastened by sickness, walk before the Lord. How quiet, contented, thankful he is. How strangely he is changed, but not for the worse. How tender are his feelings towards others. How strong his sympathies for those who suffer as he has suffered. How meek he is under wrongs. How constantly and sweetly does he look to God. He is no more like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, but like a weaned child.

If we have been sick and recovered, let us in-

quire what use we have made of our trials. Do we still remember our pains? Are we thankful to *God* for our recovery? Are we more and more like Christ? When Hezekiah had been sick and recovered, he took time to write down his thoughts. Would it not be well to imitate him?

Sickness may return at any time. Let us be better prepared when it shall make its next attack. When we must die, it is a great matter to have nothing to do but to die. So when we must be sick, it is a blessed thing to have nothing to do but to be sick. To lie passive in the hand of God, and know no will but his in such an hour, is a great attainment.

It is only in heaven that the inhabitants never say: "I am sick." How happy they are, who have finished their course, and do not rest in their beds. Their warfare is accomplished. Jesus has healed all their sicknesses. With his own divine hand, he has wiped away all tears from their faces. They sigh no more. They weep no more. How near each believer may be to that blissful state, none can tell. And who knows how many are there? Many went there before the flood; many between the flood and

Christ; many millions of martyrs since Christ ascended thither in chariots of fire: many have reached their home the last year, yea, many the last day, and *some* within less than an hour.

Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?

W. S. PLUMMER.

DEATH.

That I shall die, full well I know,
All human life is short and frail:
No lasting good can earth bestow,
All portion here must quickly fail;
In mercy, Lord, direct my ways,
That I in peace may end my days.

When I shall die, is all unknown,
Except to thy omniscient mind;
And lest, with life, my hopes be gone,
May I from thee such favor find,
That I may always be prepared
For death, and for thy great reward.

How I shall die, to ask were vain;
Death does his work in various forms:
To some, with agonies of pain;
And some sink peaceful in his arms.
Just as thou wilt;—if, when 'tis past,
My soul be found with thee at last.

Where I shall die,—I know it not,
Nor where my ashes shall be laid;
Only be it my happy lot
With saints redeemed to leave the dead,—
Small care to me the place affords,—
The earth throughout is all the Lord's.

But when in death I shall recline,
Then let my soul ascend to thee!
Through Christ's redemption I am thine,
By faith, his glories now I see,—
'Twill all be well! I little prize,
Where, How, or When, this body dies.

From the German of B. SCHMÖLKE,
by REV. DR. MILLS.

THE DREAD OF DEATH.

THE dread of death is natural to man; but it was in his state of innocence, because death could not have entered paradise, without ending a life perfectly pure. It was right *then* to hate it, when it would have separated a holy soul from a holy body; but it is right to love it, when it separates a holy soul from an impure body. It was right to shrink from it, when it would have broken up the peace between the soul and the body; but not when it terminates their irreconcilable dissensions. In short, when it would have afflicted an innocent body, when it would have deprived the body of the power of honoring God, when it would have separated from the soul a body submissive to its will, and coöperating with it, when it would have terminated all the blessings of which man knew himself capable, then it was right to abhor it. But when it terminates an impure life, when it takes away from the body the liberty of sinning, when it

rescues the soul from the might of a rebel, who counteracts all his efforts for salvation, it is very unjust to retain towards it the same opinions.

We must not, therefore, give up this love of life which was given us by nature, for we have received it from God. But let it be a love for that same life which God gave, and not for a life directly contrary to it. And whilst we approve the love which Adam felt for his life of innocence, and which Jesus Christ also had for his life, let us hate a life, the reverse of that which Jesus Christ loved, and attain to that death which Jesus Christ experienced, and which happens to a body approved of God; but let us not dread a death, which, as it operates to punish a guilty body, and to cleanse a vitiated body, ought to inspire in us very different feelings, if we have the principles, even in a small degree, of faith, hope and charity.

PASCAL

GOD DETERMINES THE TIME AND MANNER OF OUR DEATH.

WHEN we are in affliction on account of the death of some friend whom we loved, or some other misfortune that has happened to us, we ought not to seek for consolation in ourselves, nor in our fellow-creatures, nor in any created thing: we should seek it in God alone. And the reason is, that creatures are not the primary cause of those occurrences which we call evils; but that the providence of God, being the true and sole cause of them, the Arbiter and the Sovereign, we ought, undoubtedly, to have recourse directly to their source, and ascend even to their origin to obtain satisfactory alleviation. For, if we follow this precept, and consider this afflicting bereavement, not as the result of chance, nor as a fatal necessity of our nature, but as the indispensable, inevitable, just and holy result of a decree of the providence of God,

to be executed in the fulness of time; and, in short, that all which happens has been eternally present and preördained in God; if, I say, by the teachings of grace we consider this casualty, not in itself, and independent of God, but independent of itself, and according to the will of God, in the justice of his decree, and the order of his Providence, which is the true cause, without which it could not have happened, by which alone it has happened, and in the precise manner in which it has; we should adore in humble silence the inaccessible height of his secrets; we should venerate the holiness of his decrees, we should bless the course of his providence; and, uniting our will to the will of God himself, we should desire with Him, in Him, and for Him, those very things which He has wished in us, and for us, from all eternity.

PASCAL.



As it is certain that God hath numbered and set bounds to our days; so it is as certain that he hath appointed, in his infinite wisdom, the

means that shall convey us out of the world. If one dies in peace, and another is slain in war ; if one expires in his bed, and another on the scaffold ; if one perishes by famine, and another is cut off by pestilence ; if one is struck by thunder, and another is torn to pieces by wild beasts ; if one is drowned in water, and another consumed with fire ; in short, whatever way the separation of the soul and body is effected, it is not without the express leave of our Heavenly Father. Therefore, when we see the strangest accidents come to pass, and the most unexpected and tragic deaths before our eyes, we should call to mind the saying of the prophet Jeremiah, when he beheld the plundering and burning of Jerusalem, "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not ? Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good ?" Sam. 3 : 37, 38. We must remember with Isaiah, that "It is God that forms the light, and creates darkness ; that makes peace, and creates evil," chap. 45 : 7, and this exclamation of the prophet Amos should echo to the very bottom of our hearts, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it ?" chap. 3 : 6 ; that is to say, shall there

be any kind of affliction or death in that place, which God hath not ordained, and directed by his wise providence?

There are those who argue against this opinion, very grossly. If God, say they, hath numbered our days, and set bounds to our life, we labor in vain when we take so much pains about the sick, administer remedies to them, and pray to God for their recovery. In like manner, such may affirm, that it is vain for us to eat or drink; and that it is foolish care to hinder mad people from casting themselves out of windows, or from swallowing down poison; because, let them act as they will, they shall live neither a longer nor a shorter time than God has ordained from all eternity. But however plausible this objection may appear, it is most absurd and ridiculous, and can only proceed from the extremest ignorance, or the most prepense malice; for it is self-evident, that when a man proposes to himself any end, he does not exclude the means by which he is to attain to it; on the contrary, he presupposes them, and connects them together by a necessary succession.

God had determined to save St. Paul's life, and the lives of all those that sailed with him;

and this was revealed to the apostle by an angel from heaven; nevertheless, when he saw the ship-men about to flee out of the ship, he said to the centurion, and to all the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved," Acts 27: 31. In short, the means are subordinate to the end, in such a manner, that to offer to divide them, as to suppose them contrary, it is the height of folly and extravagance.

Hast thou lived a great many years in the world? Ascribe it not to the constitution of thy body, thy manner of living, nor to the skill of thy physicians; but remember that it is God who hath lengthened out thy days, and go and humbly bow at his feet thy hoary head; which the Scripture styles, "a crown of glory," Prov. 16: 31.

Art thou threatened with death in the flower of thy youth? Be not afflicted at it, and let not the least word proceed out of thy mouth, but what is seasoned with the salt of true piety. Remember that it is God himself who thus cuts short the thread of thy life, and puts a period to thy mortal race. Thou hast as much reason to grieve that thou wast born so late, as that thou diest so soon. Instead of wasting thyself in

useless complaints, and dashing, an earthen vessel newly formed, against the rock of eternity, adore thy Creator, and return him thy hearty thanks that he is graciously pleased to crown thee in the midst of thy course, and so bountiful as to bestow upon thee the wages of the whole day, when thou hast labored but a few hours. He is very merciful to thee, to transplant thee before thou hast felt the heat of the day, and the scorching of the sun. It is the gale of his divine favor that drives thee thus swiftly into the haven of salvation. Think not, therefore, that God's calling thee away in the bloom of thy youth, is a testimony of his displeasure and hatred: for to hasten to make a person happy is no token of ill-will. It may be, that God calls thee because he hath found some good thing in thee, as in Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, king of Israel, 1 Kings, 14: 13. Because he loves thee tenderly, and thou art greatly in his favor, he will remove thee from the approaching evils, as he did Josiah, one of the holiest and most religious princes that ever reigned. Because thou walkest before him, and seekest to please him, by conforming thyself to his holy will, he will take thee up into his heavenly paradise, as

he did Enoch, Gen. 5: 24; for fear the temptations of the world should corrupt thy godly disposition, and thou shouldst be turned from the way of righteousness by the wicked artifices and suggestions of the enemy of thy salvation.

DRELINCOURT.

THE HOPE OF A RESURRECTION.

LET those mourn without measure, who mourn without hope. The husbandman does not mourn, when he casts his seed into the ground. He expects to receive it again, and more. The same hope have we, respecting our friends who have died in the faith. "I would not have you ignorant," says St. Paul, "concerning them that are asleep, that ye sorrow not as others who have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." He seems to say, 'Look not on the dead as lost. They are not annihilated. Indeed, they are not *dead*. They only sleep; and they sleep to wake again.' You do not lament over your children, or friends, while slumbering on their beds. Consider death as a longer sleep, from which they shall certainly awake. Even a heathen philosopher could say that he enjoyed his friends, expecting to part with them; and parted with them, ex-

pecting to see them again. And shall a heathen excel a Christian in bearing affliction with cheerfulness? If you have a well-grounded hope that your deceased friend was interested in Christ, ponder, I entreat you, the precious supports afforded by the doctrine of the resurrection of the just.

FLAVEL.

TO DIE IS GAIN.

MANY a time, the wise and good will of God hath crossed my foolish, rebellious will on earth, and afterwards I have still perceived that it was best; usually for myself, but always for a higher good than mine. It is not an enemy, nor a tyrant that made me, that hath preserved me, and that calls me hence. He has not used me as an enemy; the more I have tried him, the better I have found him. Had I better obeyed his ruling will, how happy had I been! And is not his disposing and rewarding will as good? Man's work is like man, and evil corrupteth it: but God's work is like God, and uncorrupted. If I should not die until my dearest friend would have it, much more till I myself would choose it, not constrained by misery, I should rejoice and think myself safe! O foolish, sinful soul, if I take it not to be far better to be at God's choice, than at my own or any man's! and if I had not rather that he choose the time than I!

Be of good cheer, then, O my soul; it is thy Father's voice that calls thee hence; his voice that called thee into the world, and bade thee live; that called thee out of a state of sin and death, and bade thee live hereafter unto him; that called thee so oft from the grave, and, forgiving thy sins, renewed thy strength, restored thee to the comforts of his house and service, and has so graciously led thee through this howling wilderness, and brought thee almost to the sight of the promised land. And wilt thou not willingly go, when infinite, fatherly Love doth call thee? Art thou not desirous of his presence? Art thou afraid to go to Him who is the only cure of thy fears? What was it but this glory to which he finally did elect thee? Where dost thou read that he elected thee to the riches and honors of this world, or to the pleasures of the flesh? But he elected us in Christ to the heavenly inheritance, Eph. 1: 3, 4, &c. Indeed, he elected thee also to bear the cross, and to manifold sufferings here. But is it that which thou preferest before the crown? That was but as a means unto the kingdom, that thou mightest be conformed to Christ, and reign with him, when thou hast suffered with him. If God

choose thee to blessedness, refuse it not thyself, nor behave thyself like a refuser.

2. And surely that state is my best, which my Saviour purchased and promised me as best: as he bought me not with silver and gold. Did he live and die to make me rich, or advanced in the world? Surely, his incarnation, merits, sacrifice and intercession had a low design if that were all. And who hath more of these than they that have least of Christ? But he purchased us to an incorruptible crown, to an inheritance undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. And is it heaven that cost so dear a price for me, and is the end of so wonderful a design of grace, and shall I be unwilling now to receive the gift?

3. That sure is best for me for which God's Holy Spirit is preparing me: that for which he is given to believers; and that which is the end of all his holy operations on my soul. But it is not to love this world that he is persuading me from day to day; but to come off from such love, and set my heart on the things above. Is it to love this life and fleshly interest, this vanity and vexation, or rather to love the invisible perfection, that this blessed Spirit hath done so

much to work my heart? And would I now undo all, or cross and frustrate all his operations? Hath grace been so long preparing me for glory, and shall I be loth to take possession of it? If I am not willing, I am not yet sufficiently prepared.

4. If heaven be not better for me than earth, God's word and ordinances have been all in vain. Surely that is my best which is the gift of the better covenant, and which is secured to me by so many sealed promises, and which I am directed to by so many sacred precepts, doctrines and examples; and for which I have been called to hear, and read, and meditate, and pray, and and watch so long. Was it the interest of the flesh on earth, or a longer life of worldly prosperity, which the gospel covenant secured to me, which the sacraments and Spirit sealed to me, which the Bible was written to direct me to, which ministers preached to me, which my books were written for, for which I prayed, and for which I served God? Or was it not for his grace on earth, and glory in heaven? And is it not better for me to have the end of all these means, than lose them all, and lose my hopes? Why have I used them, if I would not attain their end?

5. That is my best state which all the course of God's fatherly providences tended to. All his sweeter mercies, and all his sharper corrections, are to make me partaker of his holiness, and lead me to glory in the way that my Saviour and all his saints have gone before me. All things work together for the best to me, by preparing me for that which is best, indeed. Both calms and storms are to bring me to this harbor; if I take them but for themselves, and this present life, I mistake them and understand them not, but unthankfully vilify them, and lose their end, and life, and sweetness. Every word and work of God, every day's mercies, and changes, and usages, do look at heaven and intend eternity.

God leadeth me no other way: if I follow him not, I forsake my hope in forsaking him: if I follow him, shall I be unwilling to be at home, and come to the end of all this way?

I*

BAXTER.

A GOOD MAN'S DEPARTURE.

. THIS good man has drifted well-nigh across the ocean. The dim outline of the long-sought land begins to form a celestial horizon. The cares and poverty, the sufferings of body and struggles of mind, the labor in weariness, the solitary journeys through the wilderness, these and all other toils and heartaches are rolling off, like the clouds of a scattered storm, and now already serve but as a back-ground on which to paint the rainbow. But brighter than any bow, shining from dewy drops, will, presently, be his glory, when, suddenly emerging, all heaven shall breathe upon him, and hundreds of those whom he had led thither shall gird him round about, to see the unutterable joy with which he will receive from Christ his final welcome home!

It is a noble thing for any Christian to die. But under the whole heaven, does God behold

another sight so glorious as that of a true minister? That he might be first, he has learned to be the least; he has ruled by serving; he has sown in tears for his own good and for others' harvesting; he has concentrated his life upon others. He has loved, longed, prayed, wrestled, preached, rebuked in love and gentleness, persuaded, hovering round his flock with paternal anxiety, that he might be able at last to present them faultless before the throne. And now he yields to another those upon this side, and goes over to look for those that he led and left upon the brink of the river.

H. W. BEECHER.

THE OLD AGE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

. . . WE have looked with wonder and delight on an aged disciple thus waiting till his change come. He is not exempt from the infirmities and pains which beset this season of life ; but his mind is drawn away from them to fix itself on the “exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” He knows not at what moment his summons may come, but he knows whom he has believed, and is persuaded that he is able to keep the great deposit until that day. Christian hope does not allow him to give way under the inquietudes of life. It is his endeavor to show, by the uniformity of his cheerfulness, that religion can despoil even old age of its terrors. Among younger Christians he sits as a patriarch who has experienced all the diversities of the disciple’s lot ; has discovered the emptiness of the world, and has made what remains of the present life a meditation of the life to come. His great business, therefore, is to prepare for eternity.

But this he does without perturbation or servile dread. Long ago he has cast his burden on the Lord, and ventured his everlasting hopes on the promise of mercy in Christ Jesus ; and having been sealed with that blessed Spirit of promise, he looks into the future with a confidence founded on divine authority ; having a desire to depart and be with Christ. Such a condition as this is among the happiest on earth ; and it throws a radiance of commendation over the gospel which produces it. The Lord does not forsake his people. In those emergencies of life in which their strength is most tried, he may be supposed to regard them with peculiar tenderness. And at length he abolishes death, and admits them to the glories of the eternal state.

J. W. ALEXANDER.

HEAVEN.

HOLINESS OF HEAVEN. Heaven excludes nothing more directly than sin, whether of nature or conversation. "There shall in no wise enter anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." What need Christ at all to have died, if heaven could have contained imperfect souls? Christian, if thou be once in heaven, thou shalt sin no more. Is not this glad news to thee, who hast prayed, and watched against it so long? I know if it were offered to thy choice, thou wouldst rather choose to be freed from sin, than have all the world. Thou shalt have thy desire. That hard heart, those vile thoughts, which accompanied thee to every duty, shall then be left behind forever. Thy understanding shall never more be troubled with darkness. All dark Scriptures shall be made plain; all seeming contradictions recon-

ciled. The poorest Christian is presently there a more perfect divine than any here.

O that happy day when error shall vanish for ever! When our understandings shall be filled with God himself, whose light will leave no darkness in us. His face shall be the Scripture, where we shall read the truth. Many a godly man hath here, in his mistaken zeal, been a means to deceive and pervert his brethren, and, when he sees his own error, cannot again tell how to undeceive them. But then we shall conspire in one truth, as being one in him who is the truth. We shall also rest from all the sin of our will, affection and conversation. We shall no more retain this rebelling principle, which is still drawing us from God; no more be oppressed with the power of our corruptions, nor vexed with their presence; no pride, passion, slothfulness, insensibility shall enter us; no strangeness to God, and the things of God; no coldness of affections, nor imperfection in our love; no uneven walking, nor grieving of the Spirit; no scandalous action, nor unholy conversation; we shall rest from all these forever. Then shall our will correspond to the divine will, as face answers to face in a glass,

and from which as our law and rule, we shall never swerve. “For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.”

BAXTER.

ETERNITY OF THINGS UNSEEN. ‘It *is not* eternal!’ ought to repel and prevent our souls from seeking their happiness in this world.

‘It *is* eternal!’ ought to attract and determine us to seek first the kingdom of heaven, even if that kingdom were *inferior* to this earth.

The eternity of unseen things proves their intrinsic excellence. They derive their eternity from an excellence which *deserves* to be eternal. The glories of heaven are full and perfect, not because they are everlasting, but they are everlasting because they are perfect. Its crowns are unfading, because they deserve to flourish forever; its mansions unfalling, because they deserve to stand forever; its thrones unmoveable, because they deserve to endure forever; its society undying, because it deserves to live forever; its peace imperishable, because it deserves to reign forever; its holiness unchangeable, be-

cause it deserves to last forever. For as all earthly things are temporal, just because they are imperfect, so all heavenly things are eternal, just because they are infinitely perfect. This is the *moral* foundation of future happiness. It rests upon the intrinsic and essential moral worth of all its sources; and, therefore, cannot end nor alter, because holiness is its conservative principle.

The eternity of things unseen proves the amplitude and perfection of the work of Christ in heaven. When about to ascend there, he said, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' And ample and glorious that preparation must be, seeing that nothing in all the prepared place will ever require to be *altered*. What the Saviour made heaven when he sat down on the throne, that, heaven will remain throughout eternity. Yes; all the unseen things which he has laid up for them that love him, are eternal things. No crown of glory shall ever dim; no palm of victory ever wither; no harp of gold ever break; no fruit of the tree of life ever fail; no fountain of the water of life ever dry; no element or item of celestial bliss ever pass away; but all things continue, like Christ himself, the same forever.

What a work, therefore, was his in heaven!

We judge of his atoning work on earth, by the many sons it will bring to glory, and fit for glory; and thus learn to admire and adore the merits of that death which obtained for them eternal redemption. And thus we should judge; thus we should learn. But let us judge, also, and equally well, from the number and eternity of the glories of heaven, the value of that life which he lived there, whilst preparing the place which he opened by his blood.

The eternity of unseen things proves the perfection of the sanctifying and ennobling work of the Holy Spirit upon the heirs of heaven. The redeemed will be fully prepared by the Spirit to enjoy all that the Saviour has prepared for them. There will be nothing in all the eternal weight of glory too high for their minds, or too holy for their taste, or too extensive for their powers. The eternal light of heaven will not be too dazzling for their eyes; nor its eternal worship too constant for their strength; nor its eternal laws too spiritual for their hearts; nor its eternal fellowship too wide or too warm for their inclination; but they will be mentally and morally fit for all the bliss and business of heaven, and for an ETERNITY of it all.

ROBERT PHILIP.

THE SOCIETY OF HEAVEN. In reference to the society of heaven, it is well worthy of being considered, that in it will be found the greatest, the wisest, and the best, from every nation and of every age. It is one of the chief glories of heaven, indeed, that it is not confined to the great or the learned of this world ; but neither is it exclusive of them. While every humble and simple-hearted Christian will be admitted, however limited may be his attainments, and however undistinguished his name, and while, unquestionably, the grand distinction of their character is that which is common to them all, viz: their resemblance to God in the moral dispositions and affections of their hearts, yet it is surely an interesting feature in our future prospects, that in heaven we shall meet with those great, and wise, and holy men whose names are recorded in sacred history, and whose example has been thought worthy of being held up for our encouragement and imitation in the house of our pilgrimage. It is especially mentioned by our Lord himself, that when Lazarus died he was carried by angels into the presence of Abraham, the father of the faithful ; and what Christian does not feel his spirit elevated and cheered •

by the prospect of meeting, not only the venerable patriarchs and prophets of the Jewish church, but the apostles and first disciples, the confessors and martyrs, who in every age have witnessed a good confession, and in every land bequeathed their heroic example as a legacy to the church of Christ? Heaven is the asylum, the home of all these mighty and noble spirits. They appeared at intervals, and were often widely separated on earth, but they are now met in that holy place to which, however unworthy, *we* also are invited to aspire.

And 'if as holiest men have deemed there be,
A land of souls beyond that sable shore,
To shame the doctrine of the Sadducee,
And sophists, madly vain of dubious lore
How sweet it were in concert to adore
With those who made our mortal labors light,
To hear each voice we fear'd to hear no more,
Behold each mighty shade revealed to sight,
Apostles, bold reformers, all who taught the right.'

BUCHANAN.

WONDERFUL GLORY OF HEAVEN. If earth, that is provided for mortality, and is possessed by the Maker's enemies, has so much pleasure in it

that worldlings think it worth the account of their heaven; such a sun to enlighten it, such a heaven to wall it about, such sweet fruits and flowers to adorn it, such variety of creatures for the commodious use of it; — what must HEAVEN needs be, that is provided for God himself and his friends? How can it be less in worth than God is above his creatures, and God's friends better than his enemies? I will not only be content, but desirous to be dissolved.

BISHOP HALL.

CHIEF ATTRACTION. There is associated with the hope of heaven, the prospect of again meeting departed friends, and the whole blessed company of the faithful, and the holy company of angels. This hope is not only natural, but proper, as animating our faith, and as a consolation, given by God himself. But this must not be paramount. If so, though we shall at last meet our dear and much loved friends; yet that meeting may be postponed till the soul more earnestly looks forward to the enjoyment of the Saviour

himself. Jesus is the Captain of our salvation, and with the Father and the Spirit is the chief attraction in heaven. The society there is indeed glorious, and the prospect of again rejoicing with our friends, and the spirits of the just made perfect, a cheering cordial; but I doubt not that in the moment of death, the absorbing thought is, that of seeing him who loved us, and gave himself for us. This earnest, paramount desire to be with Christ, may be the last step in the preparation, even in an advanced, and especially a bereaved Christian. Till this be implanted, the love of the creature may be reigning with that of the Creator and Redeemer. There may be idols in heaven sharing too much in our love.

J. BURNS.

PAUL'S ESTIMATE. In speaking of the glories of the eternal world, the rapture of the apostle does not escape him as the sally of the imagination, as a thought awakened by the sudden glance of the object; he does not express himself at random from the impulse of the moment,

but in the sober tone of calculation. 'I reckon,' he says, like a man skilled in this spiritual arithmetic,—'I reckon,' after a due estimate of their comparative value, 'that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.'

No man was ever so well qualified to make this estimate. Of the sufferings of the present world he had shared more largely than any man. Of the glory that shall be revealed, he had a glimpse granted to no other man. He had been caught up into paradise. He 'had heard the words of God, and seen the visions of the Almighty,' and the result of his privileged experience was, that he 'desired to depart and to be with Christ;' that he desired to escape from this valley of tears; that he was impatient to recover the celestial vision, eager to perpetuate the momentary foretaste of the glories of immortality.

HANNAH MORE.

O, TALK to me of heaven! I love
To hear about my home above;
For there doth many a loved one dwell
In light and joy ineffable.

O! tell me how they shine and sing,
While every harp rings echoing;
And every glad and tearless eye
Beams like the bright sun, gloriously.
Tell me of that victorious palm
Each hand in glory beareth;
Tell me of that celestial calm
Each face in glory weareth.

O, happy, happy country! where
There entereth not a sin
And death, who keeps its portals fair,
May never once come in.
No grief can change their day to night —
The darkness of that land is light.
Sorrow and sighing God hath sent
Far thence to endless banishment.
And never more may one dark tear
Bedim their burning eyes;
For every one they shed while here,
In fearful agonies,
Glitters a bright and dazzling gem,
In their immortal diadem.

O, lovely, blooming country! there
Flourishes all that we deem fair,
And though no fields nor forests green,
Nor bowery gardens there are seen,
Nor perfumes load the breeze,
Nor hears the ear material sound,
Yet joys at God's right hand are found —
The archetypes of these.

There is the home, the land of birth
Of all we highest prize on earth ;
The storms that rack this world beneath,
Must there forever cease ;
The only air the blessed breathe
Is purity and peace.

O, happy, happy land! in thee
Shines the unveiled Divinity,
Shedding through each adoring breast
A holy calm, a halcyon rest.
And those blest souls whom death did sever,
Have met to mingle joys forever.
O! soon may heaven unclothe to me!
O! may I soon that glory see!
And my faint, weary spirit, stand
Within that happy, happy land!

BOWLES.

TO AN INFANT IN HEAVEN

THOU bright and star-like spirit!
That in my visions wild,
I see, 'mid heaven's seraphic host —
O! canst thou be my child?

Our hopes of thee were lofty,
But have we cause to grieve?
O! could our fondest, proudest wish
A nobler fate conceive?

The little weeper, tearless,
The sinner snatched from sin;
The babe to more than manhood grown,
Ere childhood did begin.

And I, thy earthly teacher,
Would blush thy power to see;
Thou art to me a parent now,
And I, a child to thee!

What bliss is born of sorrow!
'Tis never sent in vain,—
The heavenly surgeon maims to save,
He gives no useless pain.

Our God, to call us homeward,
His only Son sent down,
And now, still more to tempt our hearts,
Has taken up our own.

THOMAS WARD.

EDUCATION IN HEAVEN.

“THE child is dead,” said an eminent servant of God ; “blessèd be God that I had a child to give at his call, and blessed be the Lord that he helped me to give her willingly.” The adaptation of Christianity to the wants of the affections is one of the many proofs of the divinity of its origin ; and one of its most striking adaptations is the provision it makes for the support of the affections, under bereavement of their objects.

Philosophy can only tell us that we must submit to the inevitable lot of man. Stoicism would bid us eradicate the affections, that they may not become ministers of sorrow. Christianity would have us cultivate them. She would have us enjoy the exquisite happiness they are adapted to afford, and when their objects are removed, it furnishes for the wounds thus occasioned, a balm which ministers to the soul a happiness not inferior to that which has been removed.

There are facts constantly occurring, which illustrate this remark. The writer once called on a Christian father who had buried a beloved child. Though a man of keen sensibility, he was calm and even cheerful. He expressed his entire acquiescence in the divine will. "I gave him to God," said he, "from the moment of his birth, and I renewed the dedication of him daily, as long as he lived. I intended to educate him for God's service, but God has taken the work out of my hands, and I am content; and, if I should not be regarded as unnatural, I could say I am glad of it. I have put the thing in my mind in this shape. If I had lived when Jesus was on earth, and he had come to me and said: "You want to have this child educated for my service. This sinful world is a very unfavorable place to educate a child in, and with your best efforts you will make mistakes in training him. I will relieve you of the task. I am about to return to my Father, and I will take the child with me, and educate him in heaven;"—I do not think I should have objected to such a proposal; I might have wept as I parted with my child, but I certainly should have thanked Christ for his condescension, and should have rejoiced

over the glorious provision made for the education of my child! Now the case as it is, does not really differ from that supposed. Should I not, then, rejoice that I have a child educating in heaven?

ANONYMOUS.

THE LAND WHICH NO MORTAL MAY KNOW.

THOUGH earth has full many a beautiful spot,
As poet or painter might show,
Yet more lovely and beautiful, holy and bright,
To the hopes of the heart and the spirit's glad sight,
Is the land that no mortal may know.

There the crystalline stream bursting forth from the throne,
Flows on and forever will flow ;
Its waves, as they roll, are with melody rife,
And its waters are sparkling with beauty and life,
In the land which no mortal may know.

And there, on its margin, with leaves ever green,
With its fruits healing sickness and woe,
The fair Tree of Life, in its glory and pride,
Is fed by that deep, inexhaustible tide,
Of the land which no mortal may know.

There, too, are the lost! whom we loved on this earth,
With whose mem'ries our bosoms yet glow;
Their relics we gave to the place of the dead,
But their glorified spirits before us have fled,
To the land which no mortal may know.

There the pale orb of night, and the fountain of day,
Nor beauty, nor splendor bestow;
But the presence of HIM, the unchanging I AM!
And the holy, the pure, the immaculate Lamb!
Light the land which no mortal may know.

Oh! who but must pine in this dark vale of tears,
From its clouds and its shadows to go?
To walk in the light of the glory above,
And to share in the peace, and the joy, and the love,
Of the land which no mortal may know.

BERNARD BARTON.

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